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Ebenezer Cook

*Engraved by G. Freeman from the original painting in possession of
W. Walter Woodrow Glasgow.*

THE
SELECT WRITINGS
OF THE
REV. EBENEZER ERSKINE,

VOL. I.

DOCTRINAL SERMONS.

EDITED BY
THE REV. DAVID SMITH,
BIGGAR.

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P R E F A C E .

THE writings of Ebenezer Erskine have been of singular use in the Church of Christ. They have not only served the more ordinary, though all-important purposes of conviction and conversion to sinners, and of edification and comfort to those that believe, but have been especially useful for the higher ends of exhibiting, vindicating, and diffusing evangelical views of religious truth. At the period when he commenced his ministry, a cloud appeared to be coming over the firmament of the Church in Scotland, darkening the lustre of the gospel, and particularly, obscuring what should be always the central object of preaching, 'Christ Jesus and him crucified.' Works rather than faith, and the law more than the gospel, formed the principal theme of the discourses then commonly delivered. But 'when the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him.' In the ministry first, and afterwards in the writings of Mr. Erskine, along with those of his distinguished coadjutors, 'a banner was displayed because of the truth.' The doctrines of grace—that is the doctrines regarding the entire corruption of human nature, the unconditional character of the covenant of grace, the universal free offer of the gospel, the appropriating nature of faith, the freedom of believers from the law as a covenant, and the true nature and necessity of good works—these as they were in his estimation the vital doctrines of Christianity, and those chiefly at the time opposed, formed the great subject of his discourses. The manner indeed in which these are stated, illustrated and applied, so simply, so experimentally, and so practically, is just that which constitutes the great charm of his writings.

It is not deemed necessary to enter here into any critical examination of these writings. They do not lay claim to the qualities of profound argumentation, impassioned eloquence or

polished diction. The circumstances in which they were produced and given to the public, precluded this, although had their author aimed at these things, as he on principle did not, he possessed the natural talents and acquired endowments which might have enabled him to excel in them all. They were published not simultaneously, but for the most part in single sermons, and these, with the exception apparently of the discourse on the Assurance of Faith, not prepared for the press, but printed from his notes, or as they were taken from his lips; in some cases with no corrections at all, and in the rest with very few. The earlier sermons were forced from him in self-vindication, when honour forbade him to alter even a sentence, and the later were drawn from him by the importunity of pious hearers, when, though he had had the inclination to correct, he had not the leisure. But apology is scarcely required for Sermons, which have not only stood the test of more than a century during which they have enjoyed a large circulation, having gone through a number of editions, but which have received the commendation of such judges of writing as Thomas Bradbury and James Hervey. The former speaking of these sermons says, 'The reader will find in them a faithful adherence to the design of the gospel, a clear defence of those doctrines that are the pillar and ground of the truth, a large compass of thought, a strong force of argument, and a happy flow of words both judicious and familiar.' The latter, in his Dialogues of Theron and Aspasio, says, 'Were I to read in order to refine my taste, or improve my style, I would prefer Bishop Atterbury's Sermons, Dr. Bates' works, or Mr. Seed's Discourses. But were I to read with a single view to the edification of my heart in true faith, solid comfort and evangelical holiness, I would have recourse to Mr. Erskine, and take his volumes for my guide, my companion and my familiar friend.'

It has been thought that while the whole writings of Ebenezer Erskine are eminently calculated to be useful, a selection from them might, if judiciously made, incalculably extend their usefulness, by bringing them, both as it regards size and price, what they were not before, within the range of the people generally. It has been thought moreover that the selection should, in the first place at least, consist of the Doctrinal portions of his writings, not only as being in themselves pre-eminently excellent, but as being peculiarly suitable to the present state of the religious world. A particular reason for doing this at the present moment it has been conceived exists in the late happy union effected between the Secession and Relief Churches. It has been considered most desirable that the United Church should be thoroughly imbued with those doctrines, which formed the life-blood of the several churches of which it is now composed, and

which enabled them to effect, in their separate capacity, so much good in the land. Proceeding on such principles as these, the Council formed for 'superintending the publication of the early literature and history of the United Presbyterian Church,' fixed upon the doctrinal writings of Ebenezer Erskine as the subject of the second volume of their series, and allotted the preparation of it to the Editor, who, while deeply sensible of the importance and delicacy of the work, has endeavoured to the best of his judgment to meet the wishes of the Committee who reposed this confidence in him.

In endeavouring to carry out the design of the Council in regard to this volume, the Editor felt that he had to keep distinctly before him the following things:—First, to make a selection of Doctrinal Sermons only. Secondly, to make a selection of such a number of these as would faithfully exhibit the Author's views on all the great leading doctrines of the gospel. Thirdly, to alter nothing, but throughout allow Mr. Erskine to express his own ideas in his own language; and lastly, to comprise his whole selection in a small duodecimo volume. With these objects before him, there were different modes which presented themselves to view. One was to give a system of Extracts, classing these under different Heads of Doctrine. But this appeared to the Editor a method which would neither be just to the author, nor satisfactory to the reader. The very finest pieces of art, detached from the work of which they form a part, lose much of their beauty and effect. It is the same with detached portions of discourses. Wanting their original unity, they want at the same time their original attraction. Another mode was to select some of the more important and interesting sermons, and give them, with only such literary corrections as a new edition indispensably required, just as they were originally printed. But to this there was the obvious objection, that in consequence of this great length, there being usually several discourses on the same text, only a very few could be given in a small volume, and thus not a fair representation of the author's system of doctrine exhibited. Besides there would be thus included a considerable quantity of matter which, though useful in itself, would be felt extraneous in a volume of professedly Doctrinal Discourses. The mode therefore adopted, as avoiding both these defects, and best gaining the ends intended, has been to give all the principal Doctrinal Sermons in the original volumes, omitting only in each what did not directly bear upon the subject, and re-arranging the parts of the discourses as far as these omissions rendered necessary. Had there been more space, some more sermons would have been added, but the Editor has selected all those bearing on the points for which Ebenezer Erskine and his distinguished coadjutors, the Marrow Divines,

so nobly contended—that is, he has selected, he believes, the Discourses which, had their sainted author had to do the work, he would have himself selected.

The work of preparing these discourses for the press the Editor has endeavoured faithfully and conscientiously to execute. He has first of all introduced nothing of his own—not even to the extent of a single sentence. He has only in a few instances substituted English words for Scotch which would not have been generally intelligible—corrected a few obviously grammatical lapses and errors of the press which had crept in, and added some connecting words and phrases which were necessary. All is Ebenezer Erskine's—not only the ideas but the language. He has secondly omitted nothing which was necessary to give a fair view of Ebenezer Erskine's Doctrinal system. Even expressions and illustrations with which he might have been inclined to disagree he has allowed to remain, as the object was to exhibit not the views of any man, or set of men, but those of Ebenezer Erskine. In most cases simple omission has been all the liberty taken. In some few instances, however, the Editor has, in consequence of the necessary omissions made, transposed a particular or two, and in some, still fewer, he has added from one discourse what seemed to be wanting in another.

If the Editor has executed his task as he wished to do, it is not, he thinks, too much to hope, that the Doctrinal writings of Ebenezer Erskine have been put in a form which will render them more generally intelligible and extensively useful than they have ever been. It is his earnest wish and prayer that they may be overruled to maintain among us, and even farther to revive, that system of evangelical doctrine which is the life of true preaching and the food of immortal souls. Let there be enlightened criticism, forcible argumentation, classical diction, impassioned eloquence—these are all useful and good in their place, but let there be with all and as the substratum, plain, pointed, rich gospel truth. Let our ministers and preachers be as eloquent as Robert Hall, as profound as John Foster, and as learned and refined as Philip Doddridge, but above all let them be as plain, as scriptural, and as evangelical as Ebenezer Erskine. Like him, may they all be 'determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.'

D. S.

BIGGAR, *February 1, 1848.*

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DOCTRINAL SERMONS.

SERMON I.

GOD'S REGARD TO WORTHLESS MAN.

Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?—Psal. cxliv. 3.

HERE is a question put, that is both answerable and unanswerable, both easy and difficult. It is easy to tell what man is, for the end of his perfection is soon discovered; but why God takes knowledge of man, or makes so great account of him as to heap his favours on him, is a thing that God only can best account for. David, in the two preceding verses, declares what a reconciled God in Christ was to him, and makes it the ground of his praise and triumph. 'Blessed,' says he, 'be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust, who subdueth my people under me.'

Having viewed the goodness of God unto himself, and remembering the greatness, glory, and majesty of his Benefactor, who had done all this for him, he extends his views unto the goodness of God to mankind in general, and especially to the saints, and cries out in a rapture of wonder, in the words of my text, *Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! and the son of man, that thou makest account of him!*

We may note here, 1. The subject matter of the question, and that is man—*earthly man*, as some read it; man that is ‘sprung of earth, and whose foundation is in the dust;’ man who was ‘made a little lower than the angels,’ but who is now sunk into the greatest ignominy and contempt, by his apostacy from God. 2. We have a question of contempt put, concerning this creature, man, or the son of man, *what is he?* or wherein is he to be accounted of? We may hear the solution of this question afterwards. 3. Notice to whom this question is proposed; it is to the Lord; *Lord, what is man!* The Lord is a God of knowledge, and there is no searching of his understanding. He needs not that any should testify of man to him; he knows the inward value of persons, things, and actions. God has balances in which he weighs all mankind, and therefore he can tell well what man is; ‘he searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men,’ and knows far better what you and I are than we do ourselves. 4. We have the ground and reason of this inquiry concerning man; it is *the knowledge that God takes*, and the *account God makes*, of such an inconsiderable creature, that ‘the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, and who dwells in the high and holy place,’ should ‘bow his heavens, and come down,’ to visit man in a way of love.

OBSERVE, That the regard that God shows unto man is truly wonderful and surprising.

This I take to be the plain import of the question. We have the like question put, Job vii. 17, 18, ‘What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?’ Psal. viii. 3, 4, ‘When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?’ These are down-bringing questions. It is observable in scripture, that questions, when they are put concerning God, are intended to raise our affections and admirations to the highest. So Exod.

xv. 11, 'Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?' and Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee?' These are uplifting questions. But when the question is concerning man, it brings him down in his own eyes unto nothing, 'that no flesh may glory in the presence of God.'

Now, in discoursing from this doctrine, through the Lord's assistance, I shall endeavour,

I. To give a scriptural solution of this diminishing and down-bringing question, *What is man?*

II. What is imported in God's regarding man, or making account of him.

III. Wherein doth God discover his regard unto man.

IV. Apply.

I. The first thing is to give a scriptural solution of this question, *What is man?* for we can never wonder at and admire the regard that God shows unto man, until we know what man is. Come, then, Sirs, let us weigh ourselves in the balances of the sanctuary, and see what we are: 1st. As creatures; 2dly. As fallen creatures.

1st. What is man, as he is *a creature* of God? Why, trace him to his first original, he is but a piece of modified dust, enlivened with the breath of God. Adam signifies earth, and red earth, Gen. ii. 7, 'The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.' Hence is that of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 47, 'The first Adam was of the earth, earthy.' Also that of the prophet Jeremiah, who, addressing himself to Israel, cries out, 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.'

Again, *What is man?* He is in scripture reckoned a *potter's vessel*, that is easily dashed and broken: 'Hath not the potter power over the clay of his hand, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?' Rom. ix. 21. and Psal. ii. 9, Christ 'will dash all his enemies in pieces, as a potter's vessel.'

If you ask further, *What is man?* the prophet Isaiah will tell you that he is but grass: Isa. xl. 6—8, 'The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field.'

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass.' What is all this multitude here present, but just a little grass: for as grass springeth out of the earth, and falls down again to the earth, so shall we and all living: and then the place that knows us shall know us no more.

If you ask again, *What is man?* the Spirit of God will tell, Isa. xl. 15, That 'all mankind is before God but as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust that will not turn the scales of a balance,' no body regarding it; and yet all mankind before the Lord is no more. Oh then, *What is man, that God should take knowledge of him?*

If you ask yet again, *What is man* before the Lord? Why, you have an answer that reduces man, and all nations of men, into nothing. Isa. xl. 17, 'All nations are before him as nothing.' Can any thing be less than nothing? Yes—it is added in the close of that verse, 'They are accounted before him less than nothing and vanity.' And thus you see an answer to that question, *What is man, considered as a creature?* But,

2dly. *What is man as a fallen creature?* Man, even in his best estate, is altogether vanity before God: what then is he in his worst estate? 'God planted him a noble vine, but he is become the degenerate plant of a strange vine.' Let us consider what he is *in this respect*. A creature he is indeed; but then he is the worst of all creatures through sin; for if we search out his character from the record of God, we shall find him described, first as being a diseased creature, overrun with a loathsome leprosy, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. The disease of sin has invaded the very vitals, insomuch that the very mind and conscience is defiled and wasted.

But further, *man, fallen man*, is become an ugly and a loathsome creature, Job xv. 16, 'How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?' Sin is called the abominable thing that God's soul hates. Oh! how abominable then is man, who is nothing else than a mass of sin, a compound of all manner of iniquity?

What is man, fallen man? He is an impotent and a helpless creature, without strength, 'like the helpless infant cast out into the open field,' Ezek. xvi. Men may talk of the power of nature and of their ability to convert and turn themselves, as they have a mind; but, if we believe the Spirit of God, speaking by the Son of God, he will tell us that 'no man can come unto him, except the Father who sent him draw him.' What can a new-born infant do for its own help, cast out into the open field? Of all creatures it is the most helpless and impotent; and yet this is man's condition in his natural state.

What is man, fallen man? Why, the Spirit of God will tell you that he is a rebellious creature; that he has lifted up arms against his great Lord; broken his allegiance to God, and joined in a confederacy with the devil against God. With proud Pharaoh, he has disowned God, saying, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' Numb. xx. 10, 'Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?'

What is man, fallen man? Why, he is a condemned creature, under sentence from the great Judge of heaven and earth: 'He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.' Condemned by God, condemned by the law, condemned by conscience.

What is man, fallen man? Why, he is a noxious and fallen creature. He has hurt the creation of God; 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake,' says the Lord to Adam. Nay, he is a cumberer of the ground; 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain,' under the burden of his sin.

What is man, fallen man? He is a noisome creature, that hath a filthy smell, in the nostrils of God, angels, and saints; and therefore compared to the stench of a green opened grave, that is ready to raise the pestilence; 'Their throat (says David, speaking of the wicked) is an open sepulchre, and the poison of asps is under their tongue.' Yea, we find fallen man compared to those creatures that are most hurtful unto us; he is compared unto a toad, a serpent, an asp, a tiger, a lion, and the like hurtful beasts.

What is man, fallen man? Why, he is a dead creature, Eph. ii. 1, 'And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins : ' Now, what account do we makè of the dead ? They are buried out of the sight of the living ; ' Bury my dead out of my sight,' said Abraham of Sarah. So what account should God make of dead sinners, who are destitute of the life of grace, but bury them out of his sight in hell ? Thus I have told you some things in answer to that question, *What is man?* and told you what he is, as he is a creature, and as he is a sinner, or a fallen creature. And, after all, is there not good ground for this question in my text, *What is man, that thou takest knowledge of him ? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him ?*

II. The second thing is to point out what is imported in this regard that God shows unto man, and the son of man. He is here said *to take knowledge of him,—to make account of him.*

It implies, 1. That, for as low, mean, and miserable a creature man is, yet he *is not beyond God's notice and observation.* 'I saw thee,' says the Lord, 'when no eye pitied, when thou wast cast out and polluted in thy blood.' When Adam hid himself in the bushes of paradise, 'the eyes of the Lord were upon him.' He saw what a pitiful state he was in, and all mankind in him. So Gen. vi. 5, 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'

2. It implies that the regard God shows unto man does *not flow from anything in himself,*—that there is no excellency whatever in him, to recommend him unto God ; neither birth, nor beauty, nor riches, nor wisdom, no qualification at all that is desirable. When God takes knowledge of his elect in a way of mercy, what are they but children of wrath, as well as others dead in sin ? and therefore, 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.'

3. It implies, that, whatever regard God shows unto man, *it is the fruit of his own free grace, and sovereign will*

and pleasure. 'By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' 'I will heal their backlidings; I will love them freely,' Hos. xiv. 4. Hence all the promises of the covenant run in the tenor of sovereignty, no other reason being given for them, but that of his own sovereign will. 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will sprinkle them with clean water, and they shall be clean; from all their filthiness and idols will I cleanse them. A new heart also will I give you.'

4. It implies that God *has no need of man or of any of his services*. Job xxii. 2, 'Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?' From whence it is plain that God maketh not account of man as that he could be profitable or advantageous to him. Oh, Sirs! let us not fancy that God is obliged to us for our praying, reading, hearing, obedience, or communicating: no, no; God needs neither us nor our services.

5. It implies that God's mercy and love unto man, and the son of man, is of a *preventing nature*. Man is not seeking after God when he takes knowledge of him in a way of mercy. What knowledge had the poor infant taken of the Lord, when the Lord took knowledge of it, Ezek. xvi. 4—6. Isa. lxv. 1, 'I am sought of them that asked not after me, I am found of them that sought me not.' Oh, Sirs! none of Adam's race would ever look after God, did not God look after them. Yea, so far are we from seeking after God, that we are running further and further away from him, until he seek and find us, Isa. lxii. 12, 'Thou shalt be called, Sought out.' God sought out and prevented Paul in the way to Damascus, when he had little thoughts of the Lord: he sought out Zaccheus, and every elect soul is sought out by preventing grace.

6. It implies, that whatever man be, however despicable, low, and inconsiderable, yet God *treats him as if he were some great and considerable person*. Hence he is said to magnify him; in that forecited, Job vii. 17, 'What is man

that thou magnifiest him?' he makes an account of him, as if he were something worth. But this leads me to

III. The third thing in the method was to show, wherein doth God discover such a regard to *man*, and the *son of man*? And here let us consider, first, the common regard that God shows unto all men in creation and providence; secondly, the special regard he shows to his chosen generation, his peculiar people, in redemption.

First, I say, let us take a short view of the common regard that God shows unto all men, and that both in creation and providence. 1st. Let us observe what regard God showed unto man, that petty poor creature, *at his creation*. He builds a stately house, and provides it with all necessary furniture, before he gave him a being. He rears up the beautiful fabric of heaven and earth for his use. He 'gives the sun to rule by day, and the moon to rule by night,' that by these luminaries he might see about him, and behold the other works of God. He spreads out the heavens as a curtain and canopy over his head, and studs and embellishes it with an innumerable number of glittering stars, like so many stones of fire. He plants the garden of Eden with all manner of trees, and plants, and fruits. He calculates and adjusts the creation, to gratify both his sensitive and rational appetite; he makes colours to please his eye, sounds to please his ear, delicious fruits and meats to gratify his taste, and savoury smells his scent; he frames wonders in heaven above, and earth below, for his reasonable soul to pry and wade into with pleasure and delight. Thus, I say, God discovers his regard unto man, by building and furnishing a lodging for him, before he had given him a being.

But, 2dly. Let us consider the regard God shows unto man in the course of his common providence, and that notwithstanding his apostacy from the state in which he was created. He not only helps us into the world, and keeps us from being stifled in the birth, but he provides the knees to dandle, and the breasts to suckle us. He not only inspired our parents with tender care and affection towards

us in our nonage and infancy ; but he himself, as a tender parent, nourished and brought us up, preserving and providing for us, giving us our daily bread, and all the necessaries and conveniences of life. How quickly would all flesh be starved to death, if he did not open his large granaries every year, causing the earth to produce the grain that nourisheth us, and other creatures ! The Psalmist David observes this as matter of praise, Psal. cxlv. 15, 16, ‘The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season ; thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.’ Oh, how wonderful is it to behold the connexion of causes that God has established ! how he has linked heaven and earth together, by his powerful hand, in order to the maintaining of man upon earth ! Hos. ii. 21, 22, ‘And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.’ Oh ! *what is man ? or the son of man*, that the great wheels of the creation should be carried about for his benefit and sustenance. And, to conclude this head of common providence, and the kindness God shows unto man there, let us observe, how the innocent creatures that never sinned against God, or violated the laws of the creation, are every day slaughtered for the use of rebel nothing man. The fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, have their lives sacrificed to sustain the life of man, who has forfeited his title unto all good things, either in this world or the world to come. Oh, what a favourite must man be above the rest of the creatures ! And so valuable is the life of man, that he has made it one of the ten commandments of the moral law, binding to all generations, that none shall kill man, or take away his life, till his own immediate hand put an end and period to it. Life shall go for life ; ‘Whosoever sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed :’ and that for this good reason, because that ‘after the image of God created he him.’ Oh, may not this short hint of the kindness of God to man, running out in the

channel of common providence, make us to cry with David, here in my text, *Lord, what is man*, &c. But to pass this head of God's common goodness to man in creation and providence.

Secondly, Let us next take a view of the good of his *chosen*, that we may triumphantly praise with his inheritance. And to excite and engage you to this duty, you will consider with me a little, what knowledge the great God has taken of you, and what account he has made of you by the outgoings of his love, 1. Before time. 2. In time. 3. After time ends, in eternity.

1. I say take a view of his love and kindness towards you *before time*, and let that engage you to cry, What is man, that thou takest knowledge of him, and of me in particular? And for this purpose let us run back to the ancient years of *eternity*, and see how the kindness and love of God to man did appear then. When God 'looked upon you in your blood, he said unto you, Live, and your time was a time of love.' Oh! is it not wonderful to see electing love passing by the fallen angels and resting upon such a poor pitiful creature as fallen sinful man? And when he passed by kings and princes, noble and wise, and rich, and many thousands that the world would think should have been the objects of his love,—passed by them, and pitched upon thee, a poor creature that nobody regards,—Oh! is not thy soul saying, 'What am I, that God hath taken such knowledge of me? that he should have loved me with an everlasting love? that he should have chosen me before the foundations of the world? and predestinated me to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself?'

The decree of electing love being passed, a method must be found out for thy salvation, consistent with the honour of the law and justice of God; and therefore, as if *man* and *the son of man* had been some great creature, and thou in particular, believer, a council of the Trinity must be called to advise the matter; and thus the plan of thy salvation was laid.—'Oh,' says the eternal Father, 'my love is set upon a remnant of Adam's family, and I have proposed to save

them, and to bring them to glory ; but oh, how shall I put them among the children ? I see that they will violate my law, and become liable to my wrath and justice, and my love to them cannot vent in a prejudice unto justice ; and therefore, O Son of my eternal love, I set thee up, and ordain thee to assume their nature in the fulness of time ; a body for this end have I prepared for thee, that thou mayest, as their Surety and Redeemer, fulfil my law in their room, and satisfy my justice by the sacrifice of thy death ; and I hereupon promise, that I will stand by thee in the work ; mine arm shall strengthen thee ; I will raise thee from the dead, and set thee on my right hand ; and I will give them as a seed to serve thee, thou shalt be their Head, their Husband, their Advocate, and Mediator, and thou shalt reign over them as a peculiar kingdom, for ever and for ever.’—‘ I agree with my whole heart to the overture,’ says the eternal Son ; ‘ Lo, I come ; in the volume of thy book it is written of me : I delight to do thy will, O my God ;’ yea this law of redemption is within my heart ; it is seated in the midst of my bowels.’—‘ I agree to it,’ says the Holy Ghost ; ‘ I will form his human nature, by my overshadowing power, in the womb of the virgin ; I will sanctify his human nature, and make it a fit residence for the fulness of the Godhead to dwell in, that out of that fulness they may receive grace for grace ; I will take of the things that are his and show them unto them, and carry on the work of sanctification in them, till they be brought unto glory.’—Thus, I say, the plan and method of thy salvation was laid, believer, in eternity, before the foundations of the world were laid. O then, shall not the consideration of all this make us cry, *Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him ? or the son of man that thou makest account of him ?*

2. Let us come down from *eternity to time*, and see what progress is made in the execution of this glorious project of free grace and love towards *man*. This world being created, as a theatre upon which the glorious scene was to be acted, *man* is brought forth upon the stage ; a covenant

of works transacted between God and him, by the breach of which *man* is plunged into an abyss of misery and sin. But no sooner is he fallen, but the eternal purpose and project of infinite love and wisdom begins to break forth ; and so the scene of grace begins to be acted. When man is trembling at the apprehensions of being stricken through with the flaming sword of justice, a promise of relief and deliverance breaks out from under the dark cloud of wrath, 'that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent.' An angry and offended God on a sudden becomes **IMMANUEL**, God with us, to avenge the quarrel upon the old serpent, for the hurt he had done his viceroy and representative in this lower world. This grace contained in the first promise, is gradually opened in promises, types, and prophecies, during the Old Testament economy ; until, according to the concert in the council of peace, and declared resolution in paradise, the great and renowned champion, the Son of God, actually takes the field ; and having put on the coat of the human nature that his Father had provided for him, he works wonders in it for that petty creature man, that he might bring about his salvation.

What did he ? say you. I answer, What, oh, what did he not do, that was necessary to break up the way, and clear the passage to glory and eternal life, for man ? Why, in so many words, (for I cannot insist on particulars,) by his obedience to the death, 'He finishes transgression and makes an end of sin ; he makes reconciliation for iniquity : he brings in an everlasting righteousness.' He 'confirms a new covenant with many. He makes the sacrifice and oblation to cease,' and unhinges the Mosaic economy. He reveals the council of God anent redemption, opens up the mystery of salvation in his doctrine, and confirms it from heaven by a multitude of miracles. He magnifies the law and makes it honourable,—spoils principalities and powers, and triumphs over them in his cross,—through death destroys death, and him that had the power of death,—wrests the keys of death out of the devil's hand, and takes them into his own custody, that he might make it a passage to

glory, instead of being a passage to hell. He dies for our offences, and rises again for our justification, ascends up to heaven with a shout of triumph and victory, and sits down on the 'right hand of the Majesty on high,' as the public Head and Representative of his friends on earth, and to 'appear in the presence of God for them.' A little after he is set down upon the throne, he pours down his Spirit, like 'the rushing of a mighty wind, upon his disciples at Pentecost; and gives gifts unto men; gives some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, some teachers;' and sends them abroad, with a power of working miracles, and of speaking all languages; to proclaim the glory of his finished salvation to every creature under heaven; 'That whosoever believed in him might not perish but have everlasting life.' And Oh! may not a reflex view of all this work about man make us cry, *Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or what the son of man, that thou makest so great account of him?*

Well, is that all? No; for he doth yet more for man in time. Having finished the salvation of man in a way of purchase, his voice is unto men, and the sons of men. He proclaims his salvation unto the ends of the earth, and causes the joyful sound of the gospel trumpet to be heard to the world's end. And oh! what wonders doth he work here to make way for the salvation of poor man! A throne of grace is reared, to which man may have recourse with boldness, 'that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.' Acts of grace are emitted from this throne, indemnities, promises, and proclamations of his grace: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye,' &c. Heralds are sent abroad to proclaim the grace of God through Christ to man, and to lift up their voice in the tops of the high places. A word of reconciliation is committed unto them; and they, as ambassadors for Christ, pray men, and the sons of men, to be reconciled unto God: 'because Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him.' The great

store-houses of grace are opened ; his righteousness and salvation brought near to every one's door in a dispensed gospel, with a voice from heaven, Come and welcome to Christ, and all his fulness. He stands with the outstretched arms of redeeming love, crying, 'Behold me, behold me ! O how would I gather you, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings !' *O what is man that he is thus mindful of him !*

But then, what work is he at with man after all this, in order to the effectual application of the purchased and exhibited salvation ! The hammer of the law must be applied, in order to break the rocky heart in pieces ; the fallow ground must be ploughed up, to prepare it for the reception of the incorruptible seed of gospel truth ; the strong holds of Satan must be pulled down ; the high imaginations of the heart levelled ; Satan and proud self must be dethroned. The sinner is dead, buried, and stinking in the grave of sin ; the 'stone must be rolled away from the sepulchre, and wonders must be showed unto the dead, the Spirit of life must breathe upon the dry bones.' The sinner is blind, and he must have his eyes opened. He is a prisoner, and his chains of captivity must be loosed : the obstinate iron sinew of his will must be bended by the almighty power of God, and 'he persuaded and enabled to embrace Christ, and salvation through him, as he is freely offered in the gospel.'

The sinner being thus translated from death to life, from darkness to God's marvellous light, in effectual calling, O what work doth the Lord make about the poor inconsiderable creature ! how doth he heap favours and privileges, one after another, upon him. He puts the beauty of his own holiness upon the soul, and makes it like 'the king's daughter, all glorious within,' like the embroideries of needle-work. He maketh it 'like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' He visits the soul frequently, and manifests himself to it so as he does not manifest himself to the world. He waters it with the dew of his Spirit, like the vineyard of

red wine. He breathes on it by his Spirit, makes the north and south wind to awake, come and blow on it, whereby the graces of the Spirit, like so many spices, are made to send forth a pleasant smell. He bears it company through fire and water, and never leaves it. He makes the man to dwell in the secret of his presence and under his shadow, and as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so his attributes pitch their tents on every hand of it for its defence. He plants a guard of angels about his bride, for her honour and safety, as a lifeguard, Heb. i. ult. and in a word, he 'keeps it by his power through faith unto salvation; makes goodness and mercy to follow it;' and at last divides Jordan and brings it home, under a guard of angels, to the promised land of glory, and presents it before his Father 'without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.' And upon a review of all this that he doth before time, and in time, may we not justly cry out in a rapture of admiration, *Lord, what is man!*

3. If we follow the Lord's way with men, from an eternity past, through time, to an eternity to come, we shall see just cause to cry, *what is man?*—But here a veil lies between us and that glory and happiness that God has ordained and designed for man in the world to come. And the things there ordained for man are so great, that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,' 1 Cor. ii. 9. What thinkest thou, believer, of being 'for ever with the Lord,' and of having 'places among them that stand by,' and beholding the glory of God and of the Lamb? What thinkest thou of coming in person to 'Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem' above, described Rev. xxi. whose 'wall is of jasper, and the city itself of pure gold, like unto transparent glass; where there is no need of the sun or moon,' or of these ordinances, word and sacraments, and ministers, because 'the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof?' What thinkest thou, believer, of coming to the 'general assembly, and church

of the first-born, which are written in heaven'—of joining an 'innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect,' who sing a new song crying, 'Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.' What thinkest thou of coming to God the judge of all, as thy God and Father, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and of seeing him no 'more darkly as through a glass, but face to face, seeing him as he is, and beholding the glory that his Father hath given him?' What thinkest thou of sitting down at the table that shall never be drawn, and of eating and drinking with him, and the ransomed company in the kingdom of heaven? What thinkest thou of these new scenes of glory, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy, grace and love, and faithfulness, that will be opening through eternity, in the immediate vision of God, and in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; every one of which will fill thy soul with a new rapture of wonder and praise? What thinkest thou of sitting down with Christ victoriously upon his throne, as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father upon his throne? What thinkest thou of eating of the hidden manna, and the fruits of that tree which grows 'in the midst of the paradise of God: which beareth twelve manner of fruits every month, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations?' What thinkest thou of entering into these ivory palaces of glory, with joy and triumph, on every side, the house of many mansions, the house of Christ's Father, 'whose builder and maker is God?' What thinkest thou of becoming a pillar in the temple of God, where thou shalt go no more out, and having Christ's name, his Father's name, and the name of the city of our God written on thee for ever? What thinkest thou in short of these eternal things, that are shortly to be possessed? of an eternal God, an eternal life, an eternal light, eternal love, eternal rest, eternal vision and fruition, eternal likeness and conformity to the Lord, that are abiding thee? What thinkest thou of the 'crown of glory that fadeth not away'—of 'a kingdom that shall

never be moved : an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away ? What thinkest thou of having these twilight blinks of glory through the vail, turned into an eternal day of glory ? O Sirs, all this, and ten thousand, thousand, thousand times more than I can tell you, is prepared for you on the other side of death : and after all, have we not reason to sing and say, as in the text, *Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him ? or what the son of man, that thou makest such account of him ?*

IV. The fourth thing was the application. And because I have been all along practical in the doctrinal part, therefore I shall conclude with a few inferences.

Ist. See hence *the folly of all such as are taken up in admiring any created excellency*, either to be found in themselves, or others of the human race, without running up to the fountain head, an infinite God, from whom all being, beauty, glory, and excellency doth flow. The Spirit of God speaks of it as a piece of brutish folly, for man to look at the creature, without tracing it and all its excellency to God, as its original : Psal. xciv. 8, ‘Understand, ye brutish among the people ; and ye fools when will ye be wise ; he that planted the ear, shall he not hear ? he that formed the eye, shall he not see ?’ ver. 10, ‘He that teacheth man knowledge,’ shall not he know ? These are questions that may confound all the atheistical fools in the world, who say in their hearts or practice, ‘There is no God ;’ and at the same time discover to us, that man is but a poor dependent creature, deriving all his powers in soul and body from an infinite God : hence is that challenge, Isa. ii. at the close, ‘Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils ; for wherein is he to be accounted of ?’ This challenge, together with the words in my text, are enough to stain the pride of all gloriation in man ; *Lord, what is man, for wherein is he to be accounted of ?* Especially when balanced with the excellency of his glorious Creator, he just evanishes into nothing. You heard upon the first head of doctrine, what man is in general, as

a creature and as a sinner. Now let us take a view of him in his best excellencies and qualifications, and see what they will amount to in God's reckoning, or compared with the infinite excellency of his infinite Creator? What account is to be made of his being before God? Why, he is not, for it is God only whose name is, I AM. What account is to be made of man in his pedigree, which some, like the princes of Zoan, boast of? Why, he is the 'degenerate plant of a strange vine.' What account is to be made of his riches? Why, these take the wings of the morning, and fly away, and cannot 'profit man in the day of wrath.' What account is to be made of his honours? They cannot 'descend to the grave after him.' What account is to be made of all his projects and schemes? Why, that day 'his breath departs, his thoughts perish,' and are all disconcerted and dashed in pieces. What account is to be made of his beauty? It is quickly turned into rottenness and deformity. The wisdom of man before God is but folly, his knowledge specious ignorance, his strength and power is but impotency. What is his life in the world, but a vapour which the wind of sickness and death blows away, out of time into eternity? Upon the whole, then, may we not well cry, *Lord, what is man, and wherein is he to be accounted of?* Let us cease from trusting in man; for, 'cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: but blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is,' Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

2dly. See hence *the horrid ingratitude of sinners*, in waging war against that God, who is so good and so kind unto man. Oh what tongue can express, or what heart can conceive the monstrous ingratitude of sinners, in rejecting his laws, trampling on his authority, affronting him every day to his face? May not the Lord say to us, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, Oh ye foolish and unwise? Oh my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me; was I ever a barren wilderness, or a land of darkness unto you?'

3dly. See hence *the way and method that God takes to* 'lead sinners to repentance : ' why, he just pursues them with his kindness, and draws them ' with cords of a man, with bands of love ; knowest thou not, O man, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? ' The first thing that melts and thaws the heart of a sinner, in a kindly way, is an uptaking of the love and kindness of God to man, especially as it vents through the death and blood of Christ, in the free pardon of sin, and acceptance through Christ. Whenever the soul comes to see that love, that grace, that mercy and bowels, that it has been spurning against, it begins to smite upon its thigh, with Ephraim, saying, ' What have I done ? ' and with David, ' Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. ' And it is this that influences the turning of the soul from sin unto God, with full purpose and endeavour after new obedience ; saying with Job, ' That which I see not, teach thou me ; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more : ' the soul is just killed and melted with a sense and uptaking of the love of God.

4thly. Is God so good and so kind to worm man ? then see hence, what *a reasonable command the first command of the law* is, ' Thou shalt have no other gods before me ; ' that is, ' Thou shalt know and acknowledge me as God, and as thy God, and shalt worship and glorify me accordingly. ' Oh ! shall we give any thing, any creature, any lust, any idol, that room in our hearts, that is due unto such a kind Lord ? shall we not say with Ephraim, ' What have I to do any more with idols ? O Lord, our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. All people will walk in the name of their God ; and we also will walk up and down in the name of the Lord our God. Whom have we in the heavens but *him* ? and there shall be none in all the earth whom we desire besides *him* ? '

5thly. See hence *the criminal nature of the sin of unbelief*, which is a saying upon the matter, God is not to be trusted, notwithstanding all his kindnesses, pity, and love

to man. It calls him *a liar*: and says there is no good to be got at his hand; that he is *a hard master*, and his words are no indications of his mind. An evil heart of unbelief turns us away from the living God: why, what way doth it this? It just acts the part of the false spies that went up to Canaan, and brings up an ill report of a good God, of a true and faithful God; it says, 'His mercy is clean gone, he will be favourable no more, his promise fails for evermore.' And as Israel turned back to Egypt, when they heard the ill report that the false spies brought of Canaan; so the soul, when it hears the ill report, that unbelief brings up of God, the heart turns away from him. O Sirs! take heed of an evil heart of unbelief, especially after that you have been at a communion table. There is nothing that the devil more cherishes and fosters folk in, than in their unbelief. This was the way that he ruined man at first; he made our first parents, first to conceive harsh thoughts of that good God who had been so kind to them, and then quickly he ruins them. And this is the very way that he still goes to work with his posterity; he tells you, that whatever God has done in sending his Son, whatever he has said in his word, whatever experience of his love you have met with, yet you have no ground upon which to trust him, his promise fails, he has forsaken and forgotten. If he once brings you this length, I know not how far God may be provoked to give you up to the will of the roaring lion.

Lastly. Is God so kind to man; worm, worthless man? Is the regard that he shows to us so surprising and wonderful? then let *us discover a regard to him, and to every thing that belongs to him.*

I shall instance in a few particulars, wherein we are to discover our regard to him and for him.

1. Let us regard him even in *the works of nature*; the works of creation in heaven above, and in the earth below. This is a large volume, opened and spread out before all mankind. It was a book in which David was frequently reading, and he took great pleasure to see God there, 'O

Lord my God, how great and manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.' The whole 104th psalm is a lecture upon the works of creation, and the order God has established among the creatures.

2. Let us regard him in his *works of providence*, in the government of the world, and in the government of his church, through all periods of time; and let us regard him in all the dispensations of his providence towards the land we live in, and to our families and ourselves in particular. Psal. cvii. at the close, 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' When he is visiting us with favourable dispensations, let us observe this with praise: and when he is trying us with afflicting dispensations, let us humble ourselves under his mighty hand, that he may lift us up. Psal. xxviii. 5, 'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.'

3. Let us regard him in *his Christ*, and the glorious work of redemption through him, and, beholding him, lift up the everlasting doors of our hearts unto 'the Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle.' It is the great sin of Scotland, for which the Lord is contending, that Christ has not been received and regarded, either in his prophetic, priestly or kingly offices. You know what came of them who did not regard the Lord, and reverence him, in the person of his Son: he 'sent forth his armies, and miserably destroyed them.'

4. Let us regard him in his *book of the scriptures*. We call the scriptures the book of God; and so it is, for it is given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Therefore let us regard it, by reading and searching and diving into it, till we find the pearl; John v. 39, 'Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.' And to encourage a regard to it, see Prov. ii. 2—4. God observes what regard is paid to his book among folk; 'Take heed to it, as unto a light shining in a dark place.'

5. Regard him by *attending his courts*, I mean the ordinances of his worship, word and sacraments, especially the word preached, where his heralds are sent to proclaim and intimate his mind 'in the high places to men, and to the sons of men.' David, though a great king, looked on it as his honour, to attend the courts of the King of kings, and esteemed 'a day in his courts better than a thousand in the tents of wickedness.' 'God's way is in his sanctuary;' these are the galleries where he has many a sweet interview with his subjects. 'One thing,' says David, 'have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire after him in his temple.' These are the banqueting-houses, where he entertains them with 'fat things full of marrow.'

6. Show a regard to his *great name*. This is one of the ten commands of his moral law, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' Oh! 'sanctify that great name, the Lord your God,' and make it 'your fear and your dread.' Beware of profaning it either in your common conversation, or by your unnecessary customary swearing by it, or by a slight mentioning of it even in religious duty; and always when ye go to mention that name in any duty of worship, study to fill your minds with a holy awe and dread of it.

7. Show a regard of *his day*, and put respect upon him, by remembering it, 'to keep it holy.' See a sweet and encouraging promise to them that regard God's day, Isa. lviii. at the close; 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' I am ready to judge

that folk's acquaintance with God himself is known by the regard they show to his holy day.

8. Show a regard unto his *voice*; the voice of his word; the voice of his Spirit; the voice of his providence; the voice of mercies, and the voice of afflictions; for the Lord's voice crieth in all these, and it is the man of wisdom that hears his voice. 'To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts: be not like the deaf adder stopping her ear at the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.' Whenever he comes, say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' His voice is sweeter than the melody of angels and archangels to the soul that knows him: 'It is the voice of my beloved, behold he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.'

9. Show a regard to all *his laws and commandments*; get them engraven upon your hearts, that they may be a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths.

10. Show a regard to his *promises and words of grace*, and any word of grace that he seals, and sends home by his Spirit upon thy heart; let that be a *michtam* or *golden word* to thee; and say of it, 'It is better to me than gold, yea, than much fine gold: God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice.' Roll it like a 'sweet morsel under thy tongue.'

11. Show a regard to his *members*, by esteeming them as the 'excellent ones of the earth,' and doing all the offices of kindness to them that ye are capable of: for what says he, Matth. xxv. 40, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Cultivate fellowship and acquaintance with those that belong to the Lord, and let them be the men of your counsel, and your intimates. My 'delight is with the saints.' Tell them that fear the Lord, what he hath done for your soul.

12. Regard him in his *messengers*, and *ambassadors*, his *sent servants*, who act for their great Master; and faithfully declare his mind, and contend for his cause in a day of defection and backsliding, especially any that he has set,

as it were, in the front of the battle, to bear the shock of the enemy. They have many against them, and therefore they need your sympathy and countenance, who 'love the Lord.' A kindly word or look from a member of Christ will do more service to a minister of Christ than folk are aware of: Paul, in his bonds, was refreshed and comforted with the sympathy of believers.

In a word, show a regard to *him*, by espousing *his cause*, the interest of his house and kingdom. Sirs, the cause of Christ is upon the field at this day. The cry is given, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' let them 'come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' Some, both ministers and Christians, profess friendship unto the cause of Christ, his doctrine, discipline, worship, and government; but they love to dwell at ease, and, like Issachar, to couch under the burden. But I have little skill if that be the Lord's way and the Lord's call, when others are jeoparding themselves 'in the high places of the field,' for the cause and testimony of Jesus. I may say to such, be they who they will, as the prophet said to Israel, in a day of defection from the Lord, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If Baal be God, serve him; and if Jehovah be God,' then serve and follow him. And if folk shift following Christ, his cause and sworn testimony, especially when it is espoused by a handful upon all hazards, they need to consider upon it in time, lest that sentence go against them: 'Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' Christ and his cause will carry the day without you; but take heed that he do not resent it, ere all be done; his frowns and down-looks are heavier than the frown of all men on earth, or angels in heaven, or devils in hell.

SERMON II.

THE BROKEN LAW MAGNIFIED AND MADE HONOURABLE.

The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.—Isa. xlii. 21.

THE chapter from which the text is taken is ushered in with a solemn call from God, the Father of all the world, both Jews and Gentiles, to take notice of Messiah the Prince, the eternal Son of God, whom he was, in the fulness of time, to send into the world upon the great errand and business of the redemption of lost sinners of Adam's family. And to arrest their attention and excite their admiration for this extraordinary person, many great and glorious things are said of him; as that he was his Father's honorary servant, his elect, the darling and delight of his soul; that he is qualified, and fitted, and called to his work. And having spoken of the base treatment he was to meet with from the Jewish nation, the prophet comes, in the words of my text, to declare what account his own Father made of his person and undertaking. Whatever base and low thoughts his friends and countrymen may have of him, yet he 'is glorious in the eyes of the Lord.' God's sentiments of him are quite different from theirs, for *the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake*. As if he had said, However he may be 'despised and rejected of men, as a root sprung out of a dry ground,' however you may make no more account of him than if he were deaf, blind, and dumb, yet 'he is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

The words then in general are, Jehovah's verdict con-

cerning the righteousness brought in by the great Messiah, with the ground thereof.

We may notice, 1. The great and glorious party here spoken of, and that is *the Lord*, or, as in the original, *Jehovah*, the righteous Judge, the offended Lord and Lawgiver, to whose wrath all mankind are obnoxious and liable, through the breach and violation of the first covenant.

2. Something asserted concerning him, which may arrest the attention of all mankind, and fill their hearts with joy, and their mouths with praises, and that is, that he *is well pleased*. Whenever man had sinned, the anger and wrath of God was kindled against him, and his fury was breaking out like fire, and nothing remained for poor man but a fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation, to consume him and all his posterity as a company of traitors and rebels. But here is a surprising declaration, that though he was angry, yet his anger is turned away, his frowns are turned into smiles; *the Lord Jehovah is well pleased*. Again,

3. We have the cause and ground of this surprising declaration. Why, what is the cause of his being well pleased? It is *for his righteousness' sake*. Not for the sake of any ransom, atonement, or satisfaction that the sinner could make, for no man can by any means redeem his own or his brother's soul, nor give unto God a ransom for it. It is alone *for his righteousness' sake* who finished transgression and made an end of sin, who 'made reconciliation for iniquity,' and so brought in an 'everlasting righteousness.'

4. We have the reason why the Lord Jehovah sustains the righteousness of the Surety in the room of the sinner, or why he is so *well pleased for his righteousness' sake*; why? *He shall magnify the law, and make it honourable*. The holy law of God, given unto man in innocency as a covenant, or an eternal rule of righteousness, was violated and broken, and the authority of the great Lawgiver affronted and contemned by man's disobedience. But Christ, as our Surety, is 'made of a woman and made under the law;' and, by bringing in an everlasting righteousness, he not only fulfilled the law, both in its precept and penalty, but he magnifies it

and makes it honourable; he adds a new lustre and glory unto the law, which it never had before, through the dignity of his person who obeys it.

From the words thus opened, I observe this doctrine, almost the same with the words:—

‘That Christ, as our glorious Surety, has magnified the law, and made it honourable.’

I only quote two scriptures for the confirmation of this; the one you have, Rom. viii. 3, 4, where the apostle tells you, that through the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, ‘sin is condemned, and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us;’ and Rom. x. 4. Christ is there said to be ‘the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth.’

Now, in discoursing from this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the order and method following.

I. Suggest a few things concerning the law.

II. Inquire what may be imported in Christ’s magnifying the law, and making it honourable.

III. Show how he magnifies the law, and what way he takes to make it honourable.

IV. Make some application.

I. The first thing is, to suggest a few particulars concerning the law of God, which is debased and disparaged by the sin of man.

1st then, know that the *law* here principally intended is *the moral law of the ten commandments*, at first engraven upon the hearts of our first parents at their creation, and afterwards, because that edition or copy of it was much obliterated and defaced by the fall, published to Israel from the mouth of God upon Mount Sinai, and written upon tables of stone, and laid up in the ark for the use of Israel. This, I say, is the law here intended. The ceremonial and judicial laws were things peculiar unto the Jews, or commonwealth of Israel; but the moral had a being so soon as man was created, and is binding upon all nations. For the breach of this law man was condemned, and all his posterity laid under the curse; and therefore this must be the

law which Christ, as our Surety, came to magnify and make honourable.

2dly. That the moral law is nothing else *but a transcript of the original holiness and purity of God's nature.* God's essential holiness and righteousness was too bright and dazzling a pattern for man, even in a state of innocency; and therefore he transcribes a copy of it, and pictures it out upon the heart of man, that he might make it the rule of his obedience in heart and in life, requiring him to 'be holy as he is holy.'

3dly. The law being a copy or emanation of God's holiness and righteousness, it must *be dearer to him than heaven and earth,* or the whole frame of nature. Hence that of Christ, Matt. v. 17, 18, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' Sirs, whatever mean or low thoughts we may have of the law, through the blindness of our minds, yet I can assure you, that it is such a sacred thing with God, that he will sooner unhinge the frame of nature, and reduce it to its original nothing, than suffer it to be trampled upon by sinners, without showing a suitable resentment.

4thly. This law was given to our first parents *under the form of a covenant;* a promise of life being made to them upon condition of their yielding a perfect obedience, and a threatening of death added in case of disobedience. 'In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die.' In this covenant Adam stood as the public head and representative of all his posterity. Had he continued in his obedience to the law of that covenant, eternal life had been conferred on him and all his posterity, by virtue of the promise of God; the sum and substance of that covenant being, as the apostle tells us, 'The man who doth these things shall live by them.'

II. The second thing proposed, was to inquire what is imported *by Christ's magnifying the law, and making it honourable.*

There are these few things supposed or implied in the expression.

First, It supposes that the *law is broken*, and thereby the greatest indignity done to it, and to him who gave it. Man being left to the freedom of his own will, through the flattering hisses of the old serpent, 'did break the law of God,' and so forfeited his title to life by virtue of that covenant, and brought himself and all his posterity under the curse or penalty of death temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Rom. v. 12, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Hence sin, which is a transgression of the law, is called a casting of God's counsel behind our backs, as we do with a thing that we nauseate and disdain. The sinner disdains to be under the government of the law of God, but sets up his own lusts and corrupt inclinations in the room thereof, and what greater ignominy and disgrace can be put upon the royal law of heaven.

Secondly, The expression implies or supposes that *God, the great Lawgiver, stands upon reparation*. The law being broken and violated by sin, the honour of the law, and the authority of God, the great Lawgiver, are, as it were, laid in the dust, and trampled under foot, by the rebellious and disobedient sinner. When man sinned, he, upon the matter, denied that the law was holy, just, and good; and, at the same time disowned God for a sovereign, saying, with proud Pharaoh, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him? I myself am Lord, and will come no more unto thee.' Now, God will have his law vindicated, and the honour of it repaired, otherwise no flesh living can be saved. Oh that this were but duly weighed by sinners who have broken the law times and ways without number! If reparation be not made to the holy law, for the transgression thereof, it stands as an eternal bar in the way of our salvation. It is among the irreversible decrees of heaven, that 'in his sight no flesh living shall be justified,' unless the holiness of the law be vindicated by a perfect obedience to its precept, and a complete satisfaction be given unto justice for

the injuries done to the honour of the great Lord and Lawgiver: without this, 'he will by no means acquit the guilty.'

Thirdly, It implies that man, who has broken the law, *is utterly incapable to repair its honour, or to satisfy justice.* Indeed, every legalist is attempting it, but, alas! he walks in a vain show, he walks in the light of his fire, and in the sparks that he has kindled, and then lies down in sorrow. He but wearies himself in the greatness of his way, for his webs cannot become garments, neither shall he cover himself with his works; for 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.'

Fourthly, It implies that God, the great Lawgiver, *admits of the substitution of a Surety in the room of the sinner,* otherwise he could not magnify the law in our room and stead. Sirs, if God had stood to the rigour of his law, according to the tenor of the first covenant, 'in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,' he would have exacted reparation of us in our own persons; in which case we should have fallen an eternal sacrifice into the hands of avenging wrath and justice. But glory to his name, he dispenses with the rigour of his law, and admits of a Surety, and not only admits of a Surety, but provides a responsible one too for us. 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have found David my servant.'

Fifthly, It implies that Christ, as our Surety, *actually put his neck under the yoke of the divine law.* Though he was no debtor to the law, either as to its precept or penalty, yet he bowed his glorious head, that that heavy yoke might be wreathed about his neck for us. Hence is that of the apostle, Gal. iv. 4, 5, God sent forth his Son 'made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.'

Sixthly, It implies that the holy law *is no loser by Christ's substitution in our room;* no, it has all that it demanded in order to its satisfaction. Did the law demand holiness, and perfect holiness, in our nature? Well, it hath its demand in Christ, for he was originally holy—was without the stain or defilement of original sin: 'That holy thing

which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Luke i. 35. 'He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' Did the law demand perfect obedience unto its commands? Well, that it hath in Christ; for he fulfilled all righteousness. 'He did no violence, neither was guile found in his mouth.' Did the law demand satisfaction to justice, or the execution of its penalty? Well, it hath its demand in him: for 'he was wounded for our transgressions; the just suffered for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' Thus the law loses nothing by Christ's substitution, but hath all that it required.

Seventhly, It implies that the holy law, instead of being a loser, *gains an additional honour and glory by the righteousness of the Surety*. Never had the law such a subject before as its own Lord who made it. Suppose the sinless obedience of Adam and all his posterity, and the obedience of all the angels in heaven, and of all creatures, were put together, and this obedience continued through eternity, yet this could not magnify the law, or make it honourable; because the obedience of creatures is nothing but what they owe in justice to the law of their great Creator. But here we have the great Lord of angels and men, whose will is a law to them all, yielding obedience to the law in our room. This surely adds a new lustre and an additional glory to the law which it never had before. And thus you see what is implied *in Christ's magnifying the law, and making it honourable*.

III. The third thing in the method was to inquire, *How is it that Christ magnifies the law, and makes it honourable?*

Now, for clearing this matter, I would have you to consider, that the moral law may be considered under a two-fold aspect. It may be considered as a covenant, and as a rule of life—as a covenant, promising the reward of life eternal to every one that yields a perfect obedience to its commandments, and threatening death eternal to every one that fails in the performance of this condition—and as a rule of obedience, simply prescribing the duty which the rational creature owes unto God, its great Creator, and

Preserver, and Benefactor, without any promise of life or threatening of death annexed to it, which gives it its covenant form. Now Christ magnified the law, and made it honourable, under both these views and considerations.

First, As a *covenant*, he magnified it, and made it honourable; and this he did by fulfilling all its demands. As I hinted already, there are three things which the law insists upon from fallen man, by virtue of the covenant transaction between God and Adam in a state of innocency. 1. Holiness of nature. 2. Righteousness of life. 3. Satisfaction for sin and disobedience. None of these we are in the least capable to afford; but every one of them is completely afforded in Christ.

1. I say, the law, as a covenant, demands of us a *perfect holiness and rectitude in our very natures*. This God gave unto Adam in innocency; for he made man upright after his own image. This uprightness and integrity of nature was quite lost by the fall. 'We are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity.'—'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.' Hence we are 'by nature the children of wrath:' so that the law cannot find a holy, pure, and innocent nature among any sprung of Adam by natural generation. But this demand of the law is fulfilled in Christ, the second Adam, as the public head and representative of his spiritual seed; for, 'he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin, and born of her without sin.' Luke i. 35, 'That holy thing which shall be born of thee,'—that is, that innocent human nature which shall be born of thee. Heb. vii. 26, He is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' The law requires of every son of Adam, that he should have a nature as upright and holy as that which he received from God, the great Lawgiver, at his creation. This is absolutely impossible for us to give. But it is found in Christ; for in him the human nature is restored unto its integrity and perfection; and all believers being in him, as their

public head and representative, they are in the reckoning of the law born holy in Christ, the second Adam, even as they were created holy in the first Adam. Hence believers are said to be complete in him, Col. ii. 10. They have a complete holiness of nature in him. And this, according to the demand of the law, is continued in Christ: for the law not only demands that our nature should be holy, but that we should persevere and continue in this condition. Now, this demand of the law is fully answered in Christ; for in him our nature continues to be perfectly holy for ever, however unholy it may be in us, personally or abstractly considered. And God looking upon our nature, as it is in him, not as it is in us, sees us altogether fair and perfect in holiness in him, not in the least marred: according to what we have, Cant. iv. 7, 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.' And thus, this first demand of the law is fulfilled in Christ, as to the perfect holiness of our nature.

2. The law not only demands a perfect holiness of nature, but also *a perfect and sinless obedience of life*. The language of the law, as a covenant, unto all the sons of Adam, is, 'He that doth these things shall live by them. If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments.' We must 'continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' But now this demand of the law cannot be answered or fulfilled by us; for 'no mere man, since the fall, is able perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.' Our nature, as you were hearing, being wholly corrupted, every thought and imagination is evil only and continually. Now, although this active, perfect obedience by the law, cannot be yielded by any of mankind, descending from Adam by natural generation, yet it hath its demand from Christ, our glorious Surety, Head, and Representative. The law required of us, that our obedience should be universal, perfect, and constant: these are all to be found in the obedience our Surety yielded unto it. For,

His obedience to the law as our Surety is *universal*. All things written in the book of the law must be obeyed: if there be the least failure of obedience as to any one jot, or any the least of its commandments, it lays the man under the curse. Now, I say, Christ did every thing that the law required; he fulfilled all righteousness; he did 'no violence, neither was guile found in his mouth.'

His obedience to the law was everywhere *perfect* as to the manner. The law required that we not only do every thing that it requires, but that we 'love the Lord, *and serve him*, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind, and our neighbour as ourselves.' Oh! who among all Adam's race can obey and love the Lord after this manner? Well, but this is done in Christ: love to God and man shined to its perfection in him, and in the whole course of his obedience.

His obedience was *constant, and continued unto the very end*. Thus the law required that we should not only do all things, but 'continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Man 'being in honour continueth not;' and in his best state, in his best frames, cannot continue in such a universal and perfect obedience, as the law requires, for one moment; but Christ, our glorious Surety, continued in a universal and perfect obedience to the very end; from his birth to the grave; from his womb to the tomb. Hence we are told, Phil. ii. 8, That he was *obedient to death*; and John xvii., That he *finished the work* which the Father gave him *to do*. Thus you see the law is magnified and made honourable, as to this demand of righteousness of life, in Christ our glorious Surety: and this is what divines commonly call his *active obedience*.

3. Another thing that the law demands of fallen man, is a *complete satisfaction unto justice*, in consequence of the penalty or sentence of the law; 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' The veracity and faithfulness of God was engaged in this threatening, and justice stood upon its execution, insomuch that without death, or

shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sin. Now, supposing that the threatening of death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, had been executed upon Adam and his posterity for ever, the law and justice of God would have been glorified in our ruin. Yet it could never have been said, that the law and justice of God were satisfied, far less could they have been magnified and made honourable. But by the death and sufferings of the Son of God in our room and stead, the penalty of the law is so fulfilled, and the justice of God so fully satisfied, that the Lord Jehovah declares himself *well pleased for his righteousness' sake, the law being thereby magnified and made honourable.* It was the man who is God's fellow, and who thinks 'it not robbery to be equal with God,' who became a curse and a sacrifice for us. The best blood of the whole creation goes for the satisfaction of law and justice. And thus you see how all the demands of the law are satisfied to the full in Christ: and thus he magnifies the law to the full as a covenant.

Secondly, Christ magnifies the law, not only as a covenant, but likewise as a *rule of life*; and this he doth several ways.

1. By *writing a fair copy of obedience to it, in his own example*, for the imitation of all his followers. Christ calls the law, as a rule of obedience, his yoke, 'Take my yoke upon you.' And to make the yoke easy to his friends, he first wears it, and smoothes it himself, that it might not gall their necks. Hence we are told, that he has left 'us an example that we should follow his steps;' and we are so to walk even as he walked, to follow him, and to run our race looking unto him as our glorious pattern of obedience. We must be holy, 'as he that hath called us is holy.'

2. By *explaining it in its utmost extent*, for as David tells us, 'it is exceeding broad.' The Jewish doctors, in order to establish a righteousness of their own, pared off the spirituality of the law, and confined the meaning of it to the bare letter. But Christ, in his sermon upon the mount,

vindicates the law from these narrow and corrupt glosses, and lays it open in its extent and spirituality, showing, that the law of God not only concerned the external man, or overt acts of the life, but reached the heart, and the innermost recesses of the soul, as you see, Matth. v. where he tells them, that rash anger was murder in the eye of the holy law, and that a lascivious look towards a woman was heart-adultery.

3. By *establishing the obligation of it as a rule of obedience* unto all his followers. Although indeed he dissolves the obligation of it as a covenant to all believers, so as they are neither to be justified nor condemned by it, yet he establishes it, I say, as a rule of duty even to believers, as well as others. ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, nay, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil it,’ Matth. v. 17; Rom. iii. at the close, ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.’ The law is now delivered to us in the hand of a Mediator. It has lost nothing of its original authority as coming from a God-creator, but this law of the Creator receives an additional authority, as being issued to us through a God-redeemer.

4. By *writing it upon the heart of all his followers*, by the finger of his eternal Spirit, according to that promise, Jer. xxxi. 33, ‘I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.’ Whenever a soul is called effectually by the word and Spirit of Christ, there is, that moment, inlaid a principle of holiness, or conformity to the law, in its heart. Hence are these breathings of soul after obedience to it, that we find so frequent among the saints; ‘Let my heart be sound in thy statutes: O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes: Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.’

5. By *enforcing obedience to the law among all his followers*, by stronger motives than the law itself, abstractly considered, could afford. Death, hell, and ruin are the principal motives that the law makes use of in exacting obe-

dience from fallen man. 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' 'Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil.' But now Christ in the gospel does not drag but draws the soul sweetly into the ways of obedience, by the consideration of redeeming love. He draws them with the 'cords of a man, and with the bands of love.' 'The love of Christ constrains me,' says Paul: 'If ye love me,' says Christ, 'keep my commandments.' He sets them at liberty from wrath, and the curse, and then calls them 'to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life;' and so he makes his yoke easy, and his burden light.

6. *By actuating them in their obedience to the law by his own Spirit*, according to that promise of the covenant, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' Hereby they are made to study holiness 'in all manner of conversation,' and the light of their obedience and holiness in their walk shines forth, so as others seeing their good works, are made to 'glorify their Father which is in heaven.'

Thus you see how Christ magnifies the law, and makes it honourable, as a covenant, fulfilling the righteousness of it in his own person, as our Surety, and as a rule of obedience in the hearts and lives of his followers; though indeed I think it is in the first sense that the words are principally to be understood, I mean the law as a covenant, as seems plain from the other clause of the verse compared with this, *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness's sake*; not for the sake of our obedience, but for the sake of *his righteousness, the Lord is well pleased*.

IV. I proceed now to the fourth thing I proposed, which was the application of this Doctrine,—and this simply in the way of inference.

1st. Is the law magnified by the Surety, which was broken by the sinner? Hence it follows, that *the great Lawgiver is satisfied and well pleased*, as it follows in the

text, *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake*; that which displeased and provoked the majesty of God, was the breach of his law, but since the law is again magnified, surely he cannot but be a well pleased Deity. Upon this ground it is, that such declarations are issued out, 'Fury is not in me,'—'I was angry, but mine anger is turned away,'—'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' Oh, Sirs! that which scares you from coming back to God is the apprehension, that, because of the breach of the law, God is implacable and will never be reconciled. But we tell you, for your encouragement, that a God in Christ is *well pleased for his righteousness' sake, because he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable*. God was in Christ, not pursuing the world as an avenging enemy, but reconciling the world to himself. And therefore let not an evil heart of unbelief turn you away from the living God, as though he were not *well pleased for Christ's righteousness' sake*. It was not for nought that that proclamation was made three times with an audible voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' O it is glorious encouragement to a lost sinner, hanging over the mouth of hell, that God is well pleased in his Christ.

2dly. Is the law *magnified and made honourable*? Then it follows, that *the great bar that lay in the way of our salvation is removed*. Upon the first Adam's violation of the holy law, mountains of wrath were rolled in the way of salvation. The way was so filled with briars and thorns, woes and curses, that it became altogether impassable for any of Adam's race. Hence came that horror and despair that was seated in the hearts of our first parents immediately after they had sinned. The sight of the cherubim, and the flaming sword turning every way to keep the way of the tree of life, had a dismal signification. Well, but Christ, the second Adam, has *magnified the law, and made it honourable*, and therefore it must needs follow, that all these impediments and bars in the way of our salvation are now removed, and

the way is clear to every soul that has a mind to enter in by faith. John x. 9, 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.' All legal impediments arising from law and justice, in the way of salvation, are now taken out of the way, and there is a free call to every man to enter in and be saved; in which case nothing can hinder but unbelief, which is a refusing to enter in by Christ, and they that do so, how shall they escape?

3dly. Is the law *magnified and made honourable*? Then here is encouragement, that *sin is finished, and transgression ended*. The very essence of sin lies in a transgression of the law. Well, but if the law be again magnified, then where is sin? It is surely buried in the obedience of Christ to the death, by the righteousness of the Surety. The guilt of it is taken away, and the power and dominion of it is broken in every believer, and the very being of it shall be destroyed ere it be long. So that I may say to believers under the covert of Christ's righteousness, as Moses said to Israel, with respect to the Egyptians, that were pursuing them for their lives, Exod. xiv. 13, 'Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them no more again for ever.' Poor believer, thou art afraid of these innumerable sins, which compass thee about, lest they pursue thee, and take away thy life, but stand still, and see the salvation which God hath wrought; all thy sins are buried for ever out of God's sight, and shall be buried out of thy sight also, in the Red Sea of a Redeemer's blood, and under the covert of his law magnifying righteousness, whereby he hath made an end of sin.

4thly. Is the law *magnified and made honourable*? Then the hand-writing of *the curse that was against us, and contrary to us, is cancelled and discharged*. Upon the footing of the righteousness of Christ, which magnifies the law, it is, that that gracious declaration is issued out, John iii. 17, God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world,

but that the world through him might be saved.' Christ has retired the bond that lay in the hand of justice, and had it discharged in his resurrection from the dead; and upon this ground it is declared, that 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' And if you ask the reason of this interlocutory, here it is, *Christ hath magnified the law, and made it honourable*; therefore the penalty of the law cannot take place against any soul under the covert of his righteousness. No, no; 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.'

5thly. Is the law *magnified, and made honourable*? Then it follows, that *grace and mercy reign through righteousness*, and that the law and justice can be no impediment in the way of pardoning mercy. The poor sensible sinner, whose eyes are fixed upon his own sin, and the holiness of the law, is many times ready to say and think with himself, 'Oh! God can never extend mercy to the like of me, in a consistency with his law and justice. He is obliged to take vengeance on me, by virtue of his justice.' But, Sirs, consider that the Surety, Jesus Christ, has magnified the law, and made it honourable, that mercy and grace might have an unrestrained current, even towards the guiltiest sinners that believe in Jesus. Hence is that of the apostle, Rom. iii. 24—26, 'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.' And therefore let this encourage you to pursue after the pardon and remission of sin on this account, that the law is already magnified and made honourable in the Surety's righteousness. God exalts and glorifies his name, gracious and merciful, when he blots out iniquity upon this footing; yea, glorifies the law and justice also, more than if he would pursue the quarrel against thee to the lowest hell through eternity.

6thly. Is the law *magnified and made honourable*? Then hence it follows, that *the condition of the covenant of grace, properly so called, is already fulfilled*. Since the fall of Adam, God never entered into covenant with man himself directly and immediately. No; the covenant of grace is made with us in Christ, as our Surety, Head, and Representative. As the covenant of works was made with the first Adam, as our natural and federal head, and with us in him, so the covenant of grace is made with us in the second Adam, as our spiritual Head, and the condition of the covenant was fulfilled by him. And if you ask me, 'What is the proper condition of the covenant of grace?' I answer, 'It is just this, that Christ should be made under the law, and by his obedience unto the death *magnify it, and make it honourable*.' Upon this condition, eternal life and all the appurtenances of it were promised to him and his seed. Now, when any of the lost race of Adam believe in Christ, they do not by that act of faith fulfil the condition of the covenant of grace, but only take hold of the condition of it, fulfilled by Christ, and in so doing they become 'heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus.' And so they may travel through the large field of the covenant, and pluck this, and that, and the other blessing of the covenant, saying, 'This is mine, and that is mine, and the whole of the covenant is mine, because I have the condition of the covenant in my new spiritual Head, Jesus Christ; he has *magnified the law, and made it honourable*.' Oh! with what courage might the believer go to work, in laying claim to the covenant and the blessings of it, if he had but this view of matters in the light of the Lord?

7thly. Is the law *magnified and made honourable* by Christ as our Surety? Then it follows, that *whatever was lost in the first Adam, is now recovered by the second Adam*. By the first covenant, if we had continued in it, we had a title to God as our God, a title to his favour and fellowship, a title to the creatures, all things being put under our feet, and a title to a happy eternity, after the course of our obedience in this world had been fulfilled. By Adam's fall we lost

all this, and more than I can name. But all is again recovered in the new covenant Head, by his magnifying the law and making it honourable; and the soul united to him, hath all its losses repaired with advantage, in him. We have God in him as the Lord our God, for God is in Christ, our God and our Father,—‘I ascend,’ says Christ, ‘to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ We have the image of God fully restored in him, and going on gradually in us. We have a complete stock of knowledge in him, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and a beam of that knowledge that is in the head shines into the heart of every believer. We have a complete righteousness in him, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. We have a complete holiness of nature in him; for, for our sakes he sanctified himself, that we also might be sanctified through the truth; and, through the holiness of Christ the head, God looks upon all the members, and says, ‘Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.’ We have a perfect and complete heaven of glory and eternal life in him; for he that believes in the Son hath everlasting life: and this we are assured of by the faithful word of the Trinity, 1 John v. 11, ‘This is the record that God hath given to us, eternal life: and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life.’ Thus, I say, all that was lost in the first Adam, is regained in Christ, the second Adam, and all upon this ground, that the second Adam, as our Surety, has *magnified the law, and made it honourable.*

Sthly. Has Christ *magnified the law, and made it honourable?* Then *the intercession of Christ for us in heaven goes upon a solid ground,* and shall be prevalent on our behalf. Why, it goes upon the ground of that everlasting righteousness which he has brought in, whereby he has *magnified the law, and made it honourable.* Hence he is called ‘Jesus Christ the righteous,’ 1 John ii. 1, 2, ‘If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.’ Believer, do not fear, that thy case committed to the hand of

thy Advocate, in the high court above, shall miscarry: no, he never lost a poor man's cause, for the Father always hears him. The Advocate is not only well skilled in the laws of the court, but in pleading thy cause, he pleads it upon the footing of a law magnifying righteousness, and therefore he must prevail in thy behalf.

9thly. Has Christ *magnified the law, and made it honourable?* Then there is good ground of boldness in coming 'to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace to help in time of need.' Why, believer, that righteousness that magnifies the law, and makes it honourable, is imputed to thee, and by faith thou shouldst go with this surety-righteousness upon thee; and this is the ground of thy confidence in all thy dealings with God. A believer is ready to think, 'O my prayers will be rejected of God, he will never hear them, because I cannot order my cause before him: I cannot attain to this or the other frame or enlargement of heart.' Why, believer, that is but a remnant of the old legal Adam in thee, that imagines that God regards thy person, from thy frames and enlargements. No, no; 'he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' You, and your best frames, graces, and enlargements, would be driven away out of the presence of an infinitely holy God, if it were not for this cause, that Christ has *magnified the law, and made it honourable*: and therefore let this be thy only ground of boldness before the Lord. 'Having a great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

10thly. Has Christ *magnified the law, and made it honourable?* Then it follows, that *failures of obedience on the believer's part do not make void the covenant of grace, or the believer's title to the blessings and privileges of the covenant.* Why, the whole law as a covenant, and all the righteousness and obedience that it demands, is perfectly fulfilled in his head Jesus Christ; and therefore the believer cannot fall out of the covenant, through the imperfections of his obedience. I own indeed that a believer

should aim at, and endeavour no less than perfect obedience, in his own person, and for failures in obedience he shall smart. 'God will visit his transgressions with the rod, and his iniquities with stripes.' But observe what follows, 'My loving kindness I will not take from him,' viz., Christ, with whom the covenant is made, and who has fulfilled the condition of it by his perfect righteousness; and therefore, 'my covenant I will not break' with them, nor alter the word of promise, 'that is gone out of my lips.'

11thly. Has Christ *magnified the law, and made it honourable*? Then believers *have matter of everlasting triumph and rejoicing in Christ*, and cannot receive the spirit of bondage unto fear, except in a way of correction. Believers are commanded to rejoice evermore, to shout for joy; and when they see how matters are stated in the new covenant Head, they will accordingly rejoice in Christ always, even when they have no confidence in the flesh. Why, what should discourage them, who have 'the righteousness of the law fulfilled in them' through Christ; yea, who are the righteousness of God in him? That which brings the believer at any time under a spirit of bondage again to fear, is the unbelief and legality of his heart, which turns away his eyes from Christ and the righteousness of the law fulfilled and magnified in him; and then indeed the terrors of the law covenant, and of an angry God, fall upon him, 'He remembers God, and is troubled,' and the arrows of the Almighty are within him. But while the believer can, by faith, see the law magnified in his Head, and the Lord Jehovah *well pleased for his righteousness' sake*, his heart will rejoice, and his joy will no man take from him.

12thly. Has Christ *magnified the law, and made it honourable*? Then this doctrine lets us see the error of those, who, though they will not absolutely reject the righteousness of Christ, yet will *adventure to mingle something of their own with it*. Oh, say some, 'Christ and my faith, Christ and my good works, Christ and my prayers, my repentance, my

tears and good qualifications, will justify me.' Why, this way, whatever you may think of it, is a disparaging of the righteousness of Christ, as though it alone did not fully answer the law. Sirs, remember that faith is a resting on Christ alone, and his righteousness, to the exclusion of every thing in you, and about you, as the ground of your acceptance. It is Christ's righteousness alone, that magnifies the law; and therefore there is no need of any thing of ours. Yea, if you seek righteousness but in part by the law, you are fallen from grace, and Christ shall profit you nothing; and therefore say with the church, Isa. xlv. 24, 'In the Lord alone have I righteousness,' and with David, Psal. lxxi. 16, 'I will go on in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.'

In conclusion, hath God *magnified the law, and made it honourable*, at the expense of the humiliation, incarnation, obedience, death, and sufferings of his eternal Son? Oh, *how dreadful and dismal is the condition of those, who, instead of yielding the obedience of faith unto this law, are daily in their practice trampling the authority of the law under their feet*, breaking God's bands, and casting the cords of his law from them, and yet will needs pretend to and profess the name of Christ, as if Christ had magnified the law and made it honourable, that they might have a liberty to break it, and to follow the swing of their own carnal and corrupt hearts. The apostle Jude, ver. 3, of his epistle, when speaking of such licentious Christians, calls them ungodly men, turning the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into lasciviousness, of old ordained to this condemnation. O Sirs! do not mistake it, Christ has *magnified the law, and made it honourable*, not to loose but to establish the obligation of it as a 'rule of obedience, he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Tit. ii. 14. He hath delivered us from the hand of all our enemies, that we 'might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our

life,' Luke i. 74., and that we may by his grace be taught to deny all 'ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to walk soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,' Tit. ii. 12. So that ye who draw encouragement from the doctrine of Christ's magnifying the law and making it honourable, to violate and dishonour the law of God, are just counteracting the design of the obedience of Christ unto the death, and, like the filthy wasp, sucking poison out of the gospel of salvation. And do you expect to be justified by the righteousness of Christ, and eternally saved by his blood in such a way as this? No, no; ye have 'neither part nor lot in this matter.' As sure as God lives, ye are under the law as a covenant, and therefore under the dominion of sin, and the curse of the broken law is upon you; ye are 'condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you.' And unto you, God saith, 'What hast thou to do to make mention of my righteousness, or that thou shouldst take my covenant, in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.' And therefore consider your danger in time, before you come in before the awful bar of God, lest, when you arrive there, he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver you out of his hand.

SERMON III.

THE NEW TESTAMENT ARK OPENED.

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house.—
Heb. xi. 7.

IN the preceding chapter, the apostle, in the close of it, had exhorted the believing Hebrews to persevere in the faith; and to enforce the exhortation, he demonstrates, in this chapter, the excellency of the grace of faith, and that, first, Abstractly in itself considered, ver. 1—3; secondly, By laying before them the example of their believing ancestors, both before and after the flood.

This verse which I have read contains the example of the faith of Noah, who was the last patriarch of the old world, and the first of the new world; I mean the last before, and the first after the flood. More particularly, in the words you have these things.

1st. An alarm sounded. *Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet.* The party that gives the warning is God. And when God speaks or warns, well doth it become all the inhabitants of the earth to listen. Psal. l. 1, 'The mighty God the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.' When the lion roars, the beasts of the field tremble. The subject matter of the warning is about *things not seen as yet*; that is, the approach of the general deluge, or destruction of the whole world by water, of which there was not the least visible appearance when the warning was given of God. Sirs, the word of God deals

mostly about things that are not seen, things invisible and eternal, which as yet lie behind the curtain; hence faith, that believes the word of God, is called, ver. 1. of this chapter, 'the evidence of things not seen;' a setting to the seal to what God says, though not obvious unto sense.

2dly. In the words we have the person, and the only person, that took the alarm in all the old world, viz., *Noah*, whose character we have, Gen. vi. 9, 'a just man, and perfect in his generation.' He was a just man, being justified by faith in the promised seed of the woman; and he was a holy man, whose walk and conversation justified his faith, in the view of the ungodly inhabitants of the old world. And being such a person as lived near God, God admits him into his secrets, and imparts that unto him which was hid from all the world besides. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and unto them will he show his covenant.' Yea, sometimes he not only imparts to them the secrets of his covenant, and the mysteries of his kingdom, but also the secrets of his providence, what he is about to do in the world. So did he unto Noah; and so did he unto Abraham, when he was about to destroy Sodom: 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?' The Lord will do nothing, but he will reveal it unto his servants the prophets. It is dangerous to pry curiously into the secrets of God's purpose or providence, but when he is pleased to reveal them, they are welcome.

3dly. We have the way how the warning was taken by Noah. It was *by faith*; that is, he believed the word of God, that the flood would come: and the ground of his believing was the faithfulness and power of God; his faithfulness, 'for it is impossible for God to lie;' and his power, that was able to give being to his word of threatening, as well as his word of promise.

4thly. We have the affection of Noah's soul, that was stirred or exercised by this awful warning of the approaching deluge. He was *moved with fear*. When faith sees a smiling and reconciled God in Christ, it moves the soul with joy and gladness, yea, a 'joy unspeakable, and full

of glory.' But when faith sees a frowning or a threatening God, then it begets fear, not a slavish but a filial fear; like a dutiful child, that falls a trembling when he sees the rod in his father's hand, and anger in his countenance. Such was the fear of Noah; and God declares that he has a particular regard unto the soul that thus fears him, Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word.'

5thly. We have the wise improvement that Noah made of God's warning concerning the deluge; why, his faith and fear excited him to *prepare an ark*: 'The wise man,' saith Solomon, 'foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.' True faith of God's operation is a sagacious grace; it takes up things not as yet seen, dangers that are out of the view of the rest of a blind world, and provides for safety against approaching dangers. So here, Noah's faith engages him to prepare an ark against the deluge. Noah had not the ark to build when the deluge came; no, it was ready for use when the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep were opened; and the fruit and effect of his faith and fear, and diligence in preparing of the ark, was the saving of himself and his house.

Now, I do not stand so much upon the literal, as the mystical and spiritual intendment of all this. The history and mystery of the Old Testament is opened and unveiled in the New Testament. It is granted by all, that the deluge of water, whereby God destroyed the old world, was a typical representation of the wrath of God that is revealed from heaven against all the wickedness and ungodliness of the children of men, which will infallibly sweep away the wicked, and all the nations that forget God, into hell: and that Noah's ark was a type of Christ, and of that salvation that believers have in him, from the wrath of God and the curse of the broken law; for 'whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' The apostle Peter gives us a hint, and that not an obscure one, of what I am saying, concerning this typical design of the deluge and ark, 1 Pet. iii. 19—21, 'By which also he went and

preached to the spirits in prison: which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.'

The main doctrine that I have in view from the words, is as follows.

Doct.—'That Christ is the great New Testament ark into which sinners must enter, if they would be saved from the deluge of divine wrath.'

The method, through divine assistance, shall be as follows.

I. I would speak a little of the wrath of God, with allusion unto the universal deluge.

II. I would speak of Christ as the only ark wherein safety is to be found.

III. Speak of the access that sinners have to this New Testament ark.

IV. How it is that a sinner enters into this ark, so as to be saved from the deluge.

V. Make some application of the whole.

I. The first thing is, to speak a little of the wrath of God, with allusion unto the universal deluge in the days of Noah.

1st. *The sin and wickedness* of the old world was the *procuring cause* of the deluge, Gen. vi. 5—7, 'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both men and beasts, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.'

Now, I say, as the sin of man procured a deluge of water,

so doth it procure the deluge of the wrath of God, that is or has been revealed against all the wickedness and the ungodliness of the children of men. Before sin entered into the world, God and man lived in perfect amity and friendship. Man was the darling of heaven, God's viceroy; and he gave him a sovereignty over all the works of his hands, Gen. i. 28. But no sooner had man sinned, but a dismal cloud of wrath began to hover over man's head, which had dissolved in a shower of snares, fire, and brimstone, to the destruction of all mankind, had it not been for the interposition of a second Adam, the eternal Son of God, who undertook to take away the sin of the world. For his sake, and upon the account of his satisfaction unto justice, a stop is put to the execution of divine vengeance. But that same flood of wrath will run with the greatest violence against all unbelievers, who reject him, and his great salvation, Heb. ii. 3. and x. 28, &c.

2dly. God did not take the inhabitants of the old world by surprise; but *gave them warning* before the flood came and destroyed them. He dealt with them by the ministry of Noah for the space of one hundred and twenty years, (compare Gen. v. 32. with vi. 11.) in order to reclaim them, but all in vain.

Just so, God is long-suffering, and slow to wrath, towards the children of men. He doth not speedily execute judgment, like man, in a fury and rage. No; but he waits to be gracious; he warns of the wrath to come, and beseeches and entreats them to turn from their evil ways. Forty years was his spirit grieved with that generation of Israel in the wilderness, until at length he sware in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest; but many a time he turned away his wrath, Psal. lxxviii. 38. before it came to that.

3dly. When the appointed hour for the execution of the threatening against the old world came, God *made the heavens and the earth to combine* for their destruction; for both the fountains of the great depth, from below were broken up, and the windows of heaven above were opened upon them, Gen. vii. 11.

Just so, God, who is the Lord of hosts, and doth whatsoever he wills in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, Dan. iv. 35. can and will arm the whole creation against impenitent sinners. He can command the earth to open its mouth, and swallow up its inhabitants, as it did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numb. xvi. 31, 32; and he can call for hosts of angels and celestial luminaries to avenge his quarrel upon rebellious sinners, as he did in the case of Sennacherib, 2 Kings xix. 35. and the inhabitants of Canaan, Exod. xxxiii. 2.

4thly. The waters of the flood were *irresistible*. All the inhabitants of the old world, with their united force, though many of them were giants, men of huge stature and strength, Gen. vi. 4. were yet not capable to stop the current of the flood.

Sirs, the wrath of God, when it breaks out upon Christ-despisers, cannot be stopped by all the power of angels or men. 'Who hath hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?' Job ix. 4. 'Who would set the briers and thorns in battle against him? he would go through them, he would consume them together,' Isa. xxvii. 4. 'The stout-hearted are spoiled, the men of might cannot find their hands,' when God contendeth. Psal. lxxvi. 5.

5thly. The waters of the deluge *overflowed all the refuges* that the inhabitants of the old world fled to for shelter. We may easily imagine, that they would fly to the highest rocks and mountains to save themselves from the waters; but the waters swelled and rose, until they covered all the high hills and mountains on the face of the earth, under the whole heaven, Gen. vii. 18—20; there was no shelter left them.

Just so is it in the case before us. Sinners, when they hear of the wrath and vengeance of God pursuing them on the account of sin, fly to the hills and mountains of their own making. Some fly to the mountains of general mercy: but God sweeps away that; for 'he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour,' Isa. xxvii. 11. Some fly

to the refuge of an outward profession of religion, and think to find shelter there; but the water of God's wrath pursues them there, as it did the foolish virgins with their empty lamps, Matth. xxv. 6. Others fly to the mountain of the works of the law; but the deluge pursues them there, 'for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,' Gal. ii. 16. Thus God makes 'the hail to sweep away the refuge of lies,' Isa. xxviii. 17.

6thly. The flood *was universal*; it spared none but those that were in the ark. In like manner, the flood of God's wrath will destroy all that are out of Christ: 'for there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus,' Acts iv. 12.

II. The second thing proposed was, to speak a little of Christ, as the great New Testament ark, that God has provided for saving sinners from the deluge of his wrath.

1st. The ark was a *means of God's preparing for the salvation of Noah and his family*. It is true, Noah built the ark; but it was entirely at God's order and direction. It would never have entered into Noah's head or heart to build the ark, if God had not given him the plan of it.

Just so, Christ is a Saviour of God's providing and appointment. The plan of man's redemption by Christ was laid in the heart of God; it is the wisdom of God in a mystery. Men and angels would have been at an eternal stand, if it had been put to them, how man should be saved from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, in a consistency with the justice, holiness, truth and faithfulness of God. The whole creation cried, Your help is not in us. Well, but God devises a way. The Son of God shall be incarnate, and be substituted in the room of sinners; and, by his obedience to death, justice shall be satisfied, and the honour of the law repaired, and 'whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,' John iii. 16. Psal. cxviii. 23, 'This is the LORD'S DOING, it is wondrous in our eyes.' We find God glorying in it as the chief of his ways, Psal. lxxxix. 19, 20, 'I have laid

help upon one that is mighty, I have found David my servant.'

2dly. The ark was *very large and capacious*, as is clear from the account we have of it, Gen. vi. 14—19. And it was necessary it should be so, considering that it was the common receptacle, not only of Noah and his family, but of all sorts of beasts, birds, and living creatures, that were upon earth, and necessary provision for their subsistence, for the space of about a whole year.

But, Sirs, the New Testament ark is far more large and capacious than Noah's ark; for it is none other than the infinite and incomprehensible God, in the person of the eternal Son, who made all things, and upholds them by the word of his power, John i. 3. Heb. i. 3. As there was room and provision in the ark for all the living creatures of every kind that entered into the ark: so there is room in Christ for all that will come, be they Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, male or female, it is all one. Ye are welcome to enter into the New Testament ark, John iii. 16. and x. 9.

3dly. All that *entered into the ark were saved*, but all that did *not enter in perished*, Gen. vii. 21—23.

Just so is it here, Mark xvi. 16, 'he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.' There are innumerable multitudes of mankind that are already lost irrecoverably in the deluge of God's wrath, through their not entering into the ark. O what innumerable numbers of men and women have gone down to the sides of the pit since sin entered into the world; 'Broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many there be that go in thereat,' Matth. vii. 13. And all must inevitably go the same way, I mean, perish in the deluge, except they enter into the ark; 'For there is none other name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we must be saved, but by the name of Jesus Christ,' Acts iv. 12. It is not your broken planks of a profession of religion, hope in the general mercy of God, your civility, morality, legal righteousness, that will do: God's wrath will stave all

these broken planks in pieces; and therefore repair to the ARK Jesus Christ.

4thly. Although there were but few saved in the ark, (only eight souls), yet it was *a great evidence of God's love and kindness to man that any of them were spared*, when they all deserved to die, Gen. vi. 5, 2, 12.

Just so here, although there are but few that are saved, yet his providing a Saviour, and saving a remnant of mankind by Christ, is a wonderful instance of his love and kindness to mankind. 1 John iv. 9, 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

5thly. Noah and his family, after they were saved by the ark, got a promise *That the water should never more destroy the earth*, Gen. ix. 9—11; and, in token thereof, the bow was set in the clouds. ver. 12—17.

So all that fly to Christ are secured by God's covenant and promise from the wrath and curse of God, Rom. viii. 1, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.' Isa. liv. 10—12, 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.' We read, Rev. iv. 3. of a rainbow about the throne of Christ, which alludes unto the transaction with Noah anent the flood.

6thly. *All sorts of creatures, clean and unclean, were admitted into the ark*, without distinction, Gen. vii. 8, 9. The ark was open to them all.

Just so is it now, under the New Testament. Since the coming of Christ in the flesh, the gospel of the grace of God is preached promiscuously unto Jews and Gentiles,

without any distinction. It is true, before the death of Christ, and during his personal ministry on earth, the poor Gentiles were excluded, and the disciples, when sent to preach the gospel to the Jews, were discharged to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans, Matth. x. 5. But after his death and resurrection, their commission is enlarged, and the door is cast open unto all nations, Mark xvi. 15, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' It is true, too, the apostles, even after the resurrection of Christ, and the down-pouring of the Spirit in his extraordinary gifts, could not understand this commission of preaching the gospel to every creature, but continued preaching it to the Jews only, Acts x. 19. until they were cured of their mistake, by Peter's vision of beasts clean and unclean, Acts x. 11—16. and the Holy Ghost falling down upon the Gentiles, as well as upon the Jews, ver. 44. But thereupon they began, according to their commission, to preach the gospel to all without any distinction; and when the Jews refused the gospel, the apostles turned themselves unto the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 43—49. So that I say, as Noah admitted of beasts clean and unclean into the ark, in order to their being saved from the deluge; so our great New Testament ark is opened to sinners of all sorts and sizes; if they be descended of the first Adam, they are all welcome to a second Adam, Prov. viii. 4, 'Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.' But this leads me to

III. The third thing in the method, which was to speak a little of the door of access unto the New Testament ark.

Noah's ark stood open until the creatures that could not subsist in the waters had entered in, and until the deluge broke out, Gen. vii. 7—9; for, if it had been shut, no creature could have entered into it, or been saved.

Just so, if there were not a way or door of access unto Christ, no flesh could be saved. But we bring you good tidings of great joy, Luke ii. 10. Christ is a common ark, a common Saviour, to sinners of mankind: And to en-

courage poor perishing sinners to come to him, I will tell you of several doors by which entrance by faith is to be had into the New Testament ark, that you may not perish in the deluge.

1st. The door of *the revelation of Christ as a Saviour come into the world*. What is the design of the whole scriptures of truth, from the beginning to the ending, but to make Christ known to the sons of men, in order to their believing in him, that they may be saved from the wrath to come. John xx. last, 'These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.' John v. 39, 'Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.' Sirs, Christ is evidently set forth before you in the word read and preached, his whole righteousness and salvation is *set before you*, and brought *near to you*; and pray, for what end? Just that you may improve him to all the ends of his saving offices. They that want the Bible and a preached gospel will have far more to say for themselves, than you unto whom the word of God and the gospel of salvation is *sent*, (John xv. 22. compared with Matth. x. 15. Rom. x. 14.) for 'how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' But this is not the case with you; for Christ is nigh to you, in your mouths and hearts, even in this word of faith which we preach, Rom. x. 8. So that the very revelation of Christ is a door of faith, especially when we declare to you, from Christ's own mouth, 'that he came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved,' John iii. 17.

2dly. *The incarnation of the Son of God*, or his assuming our nature into a personal union with his divine nature, is a blessed door of faith for any poor perishing sinner of Adam's family. This we find is set forth for a ground of faith through the whole scriptures of truth. It was the first thing proposed to Adam and Eve immediately after the fall, when they were under awful apprehensions of

present death, Gen. iii. 14, 15. They were to believe, that the Son of God, who was speaking to them, would, in the fulness of time, become the seed of the woman, or be incarnate, and avenge their quarrel; and the faith of this eased and quieted their spirits, because in this they saw that God was upon their side. So in the promise made to Abraham, the incarnation of the Son of God was presented unto him and his posterity, Gen. xxii. 18, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' Upon which the apostle, Gal. iii. 16, gives the following commentary, 'He doth not speak of seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.' In the rest of the scriptures, where these two promises are more fully opened, we find the incarnation of the Son of God presented as a ground of faith and hope to the church of God. David in the Psalms, frequently speaks of him as man, Psal. viii. 4. compared with Heb. ii. 6,—the Son of man, and the Man of God's right hand, Psal. lxxx. 17. Isaiah speaks of him as a child born unto us, although at the same time his name is THE MIGHTY God, chap. ix. 6. Jeremiah speaks of him as a Branch of righteousness, chap. xxxiii. 15. that was to spring out of the root of Jesse, Isa. xi. 1. And everywhere almost in the New Testament, he is presented as the Word made flesh, John i. 14; made of a woman, Gal. iv. 4; the seed of the woman, Gen. iii. 16; born of a virgin, Matth. i. 16; who 'took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,' Heb. ii. 16. And commonly, when he speaks of himself through the evangelists, he denominates himself by the human nature, rather than by the divine, 'The Son of man.' One special reason of which is, as I think, because the faith of sinners could not terminate or fix upon his divine nature, but by virtue of his human nature. The hand of faith lays hold upon the skirt of the human nature, that it may thereby draw, as it were, the divine nature along with it, knowing that the personal union between these two natures cannot be dissolved.

Now, that there is here a general ground of faith laid

for all mankind that hear of this great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, appears, if we consider, that it was not the person, but the nature of man that Christ assumed. And the nature of man is equally related to every man and woman, that possesses a true body, and a reasonable soul. Insomuch that every one that hears of him is warranted to say, This is my brother, 'bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,' Gen. ii. 23. as Adam said of Eve when presented unto him, and therefore a help meet for me, ver. 20. O Sirs, consider this, and dwell upon it. Christ, by virtue of his incarnation, is our Goel or Kinsman, he is our blood relation, and he took part of your flesh, that so he might be capable to act a part for you, which none else of the human race was capable to do, even to redeem you by his blood, and by death to bruise the head of the serpent. And is not this a noble ground of faith, trust, and confidence in him? O Sirs! enter in and take possession of the New Testament ark, by this door of his incarnation, and claim him as yours, by an appropriating faith, saying with the church, Isa. ix. 6. To us (or to me) is this child born—this son given. This doctrine was delivered by the angels at the birth of Christ, as good tidings of great joy unto all people, Luke ii. 10, 11, where they say to the shepherds, (not to us, but) 'to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

3dly. Another passage by which faith may enter into the New Testament ark, is *Christ's obedience to the law, which was violated*, broken, and dishonoured by the sin of the first Adam, and of all his posterity. For understanding of this, know that the condition upon which life was promised to Adam, and to all mankind in him, was perfect obedience unto the command of the law, 'He that doth these things shall live in them,' Lev. xviii. 5. compared with Gal. iii. 12. And if Adam had continued in his obedience, he and his posterity might have claimed temporal, spiritual, and eternal life, as a debt due to them (though not upon the account of the intrinsic merit of his obedience, yet) by virtue of

the paction in the covenant of works. Well, man being in honour, continued not, Psal. xlix. 12. compared with Gen. iii. 6. He brake the covenant by eating the forbidden fruit; and all his children's teeth ever since have been set on edge against God, their carnal minds being enmity against God, are not subject to the law of God, Rom. viii. 7. By which means they have lost their title to that life promised in the first covenant, and are fallen under the sentence of death, and without the honour of the law be repaired by a perfect obedience yielded unto it by man, or one in man's nature, it stands as an eternal bar in the way of life and salvation unto all mankind.

Well, Christ, the eternal Son of God, as man's Kinsman and Surety, undertakes to repair the broken law, saying to his Father, 'Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart,' Psal. xl. 7, 8. compared with Heb. x. 7. as if he had said, 'Let my ear be bored unto thy service in this matter, for it is the firm purpose of my heart to fulfil all righteousness that the law requires of mankind sinners.' And accordingly, in the fulness of time, he is not only made of a woman, but made under the law, Gal. iv. 4. and in our stead and room magnifies the law and makes it honourable, Isa. xlii. 21. By this means, 'all legal bars and impediments lying in the way of salvation and life, on the part of the command of the law is made up again, and the law as fully satisfied as though it had never been broken, and the title to the life promised in the covenant of works comes to stand in the person of our common Kinsman and blood relation;' upon which account, his righteousness and salvation is published and brought near unto all; yea, even unto them that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, Isa. xlvi. at the close. And you see in the fortieth psalm, after he had said to his Father, in the council of peace, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart,' immediately he adds, ver. 9, 10, 'I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not

hid thy righteousness within my heart,' &c. Thus you see that all who have the gospel preached unto them have a right of access to his righteousness or perfect obedience to the law; and whoever they be that believe in him as the Lord our righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. they enter into the New Testament ark, and are saved from the deluge of God's wrath; 'For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' because the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, Rom. viii. 1, 3, 4. and x. 4. Christ becomes the end of the law for righteousness to them. Hence is that of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. at the close, 'God was in Christ, not imputing their trespasses to them: for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

4thly. *The death of Christ, or his atoning blood,* is another door by which poor sinners do enter into the New Testament ark, and are saved from the deluge of divine wrath. We are said to come by faith unto the blood of sprinkling, Heb. xii. 24. 'and to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,' chap. x. 19. Christ as crucified is evidently set forth, Gal. iii. 1. before all, in the dispensation of the gospel; hence the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, 'That he determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' 1 Cor. ii. 2. Christ says, speaking of his death, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,' John xii. 32. And accordingly, when the apostles went through the nations preaching the gospel, what was the great theme they continually dwelt upon? 'We,' says he, 'preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

For clearing this matter of the death of Christ as a ground of faith, you must know that there is a threefold sufficiency in the death of Christ.

1. An *intrinsic* sufficiency, arising from the infinite dignity of his person who suffered, being the infinite God in

the person of the Son, clothed with a veil of flesh; and in this respect there was such a value in his death and blood, that it was sufficient, not only to redeem all mankind, but ten thousand worlds, supposing their existence and fall too, if it had been so ordained. But,

2. There is an *ordinate* sufficiency, whereby the death and satisfaction of Christ is limited unto the elect, and in this respect Christ declares that he laid down his life for the sheep, John x. 15.

3. There is a *legal* sufficiency, by which the law and its penalty is fully answered; insomuch that neither law nor justice is any obstruction or bar in the way of a sinner's salvation that believes in him; but, on the contrary, that moment a sinner believes in him, 'all the charges that the law and justice had against the poor sinner, are all cancelled,' Gal. iii. 10. Col. ii. 14. Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34.

Now, when we speak of the death of Christ as a ground of faith, we abstract entirely from the *ordinate* sufficiency of it for the elect; for that being among the secret things that belong unto the Lord, Deut. xxix. 29. it can never be a ground of faith unto any man, no, not unto the elect themselves, that Christ died for the elect, otherwise a man behoved to know his election before he adventured to believe, which is a thing absolutely impossible, inasmuch as our election of God is a thing that can only be known by obeying the call of the gospel. Hence we are commanded, 2 Pet. i. 10, 'to give all diligence to make our calling and (then) our election sure.' And therefore, seeing it is not the *ordinate* sufficiency of the death of Christ that we are commanded to preach, which would lead us in among the secret decrees of God, which do not belong unto us, it must needs be the *intrinsic* and *legal* sufficiency of the death of Christ that is to be held forth as the ground and foundation of faith to sinners of mankind. Hence are these universal and extensive expressions in scripture, John i. 29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.' 1 John ii. 2, 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole

world.' 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'He is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.' All mankind have such an interest in the death and satisfaction of Christ as the devils have not. Yea, considering that it was the human nature that was the sacrifice, and that all mankind are related to him through his taking hold of the human nature, (as was said,) it is impossible to conceive how all mankind, especially gospel hearers, should not have an interest in his death, I mean such as warrants them to say, in faith, 'He loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20. 'He was delivered for our offences,' Rom. iv. 25. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,' &c., Isa. liii. 5. And upon this account I conceive that the death of Christ, and the benefits flowing therefrom, is said to be 'a feast made unto all people, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,' Isa. xxv. 6. This is the carcase unto which all the hungry eagles of mankind should gather, and feed to the full, Matt. xxiv. 28. Hence it is that, Luke xiv. 21, 23, 'The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, that lie about the hedges and highways, are called, yea compelled, to come in' and feast with him.

5thly. *The great and precious promises of the covenant of grace*, especially the absolute promises, (which have no manner of condition annexed to them,) are another door by which faith enters into the New Testament ark, and saves the soul from the deluge of divine wrath. A promise of Christ was the first door opened to Adam and Eve immediately after the fall, Gen. iii. 15. It (viz., the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head (viz., the serpent's). After the same manner the door of faith was opened to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18, 'And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' And (in that promised seed) 'I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee,' chap. xvii. 7. All the other promises are so many streams and little rivulets of grace that flow out of the womb of these two promises; such as Isa. xlv. 3, 'For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;' Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I give them a heart to know me, that I am

the Lord;’ Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27, ‘Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: and from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you,’ &c. ‘And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes;’ Hos. xiv. 4, ‘I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.’ Now, it is by virtue of these great and precious promises of the new covenant that we receive and apply Christ, and his righteousness and fulness, as our excellent confession of faith well expresses it; and therefore I call this promise of God a door by which we enter into the New Testament ark.

For further clearing of this matter, know and consider that the promises of God carry a general endorsement or direction to all the race of Adam, and especially to all the visible church, Luke ii. 9, ‘I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.’ Wisdom’s promising voice is to men, and to the sons of men: ‘To you is the word of this salvation sent.’ The apostle Peter, Acts ii. 38. when he is preaching to a company of men who had imbrued their hands in the blood of Christ, calls them to repent, ‘Repent every one of you, and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;’ and to lead them to repentance, he discovers to them the mercy of God in Christ, by presenting to them the promise of pardon in the blood of the Messiah, which they had shed, saying, ver. 39, ‘The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ And what Peter said to his hearers, that I say unto every one of you, ‘The promise is unto you, and to your children.’ And as the apostle Paul tells the Hebrews, chap. iv. 1, the promise is left to you as God’s charter for the good land of glory, as God’s promise was given to Israel as a security or charter for the land of Canaan. Yes, God’s promise is our charter for eternal life, and ‘therefore let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.’ But as that generation of men that came out of

Egypt could not enter in, because of their unbelief, just so, there are many, many, that shall never enter into the land of glory above, because of their unbelief. They have a good right, but they lose the benefit of their right by unbelief, as Israel did, who believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation, Psal. lxxviii. 22. so that you see the promise is a door for entering into the ark. Oh! do not shut the door of faith upon yourselves, lest God shut it also, and swear in his wrath that ye shall not enter into it, but be left to perish in the deluge, Psal. xc. 7.

6thly. Another door by which faith enters into the New Testament ark, is *the Father's gift of Christ unto mankind lost*. There is such a gift of Christ in the word as warrants any man that reads it to receive, appropriate, and apply Christ and all his purchased salvation to himself in particular, and to rejoice in him as his own property. Isa. lv. 4, 'Behold I have given him for a Witness unto the people, a Leader and Commander unto the people;' Isa. xlii. 6, 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;' chap. xlix. 6, 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth;' John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life;' John vi. 32, 'My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven;' Isa. ix. 6, 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.' From these and many other places, it appears there is such an universal gift or grant of Christ unto sinners of mankind, as makes it lawful and warrantable for every one to receive, use, and apply him for all the ends for which he is given,—for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. No man doubts of his right to take or receive a gift when it is held out to him, and he bidden take it. And it argues a very strange infatuation in men and women, that they should so readily grasp at a gift of this world's good, and yet be backward in receiving God's unspeakable gift, that would make them up in time and through all eternity. If I had this house

full of gold and silver to distribute and scatter among you, and were calling every man and woman, young and old, to come and get as much as they want, I am sure there would be few or none in that case that would draw back, every one would be more forward than another to receive or gather. Well, Sirs, why so forward to receive worldly riches that take wings and flee away, and yet refuse to receive Christ and his unsearchable riches which we are scattering among you in the dispensation of the word? Here is the great gift of heaven, without money or price. Here is the gift of life; for, 'He that hath the Son, hath life,' 1 John v. 12. Here is the gift of righteousness, that will entitle you to God, to heaven, and glory, and all the good of the covenant. Here is given gold tried in the fire, Rev. iii. 18. that moth and rust cannot corrupt, Matt. vi. 20. Here is the best robe, Luke xv. 22.—White raiment, Rev. iii. 18. Clothing that doth not wax old. Here is the merchandise of wisdom, that is better than the merchandise of silver, and her gain, which is better than fine gold. Prov. iii. 1, 4.

7thly. *The command of God, that is laid upon every one that hears the gospel, to believe in Christ, is a blessed door of access into the New Testament ark, John iii. 23, 'This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.'* Sirs, God has such a good will towards our salvation, that he has concluded us under a law, and has interposed his authority, enjoining us to believe in the name of his Son; and he has fenced this law with the most awful and terrible threatening in case of disobedience; 'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,' John iii. 18. Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' chap. x. 28, 29, 'He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God;' chap. vi. 5, 'crucified unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.'

Thus you see that the command is peremptory, that you must believe in the name of Christ; you must receive him as the gift of God, otherwise you shall sink in the mighty waters of the deluge of eternal wrath and vengeance, and Christ himself will resent it to the uttermost if his salvation be slighted; for he will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on all them who know not God, and who obey not this great command of believing in the name of the only begotten Son of God, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

Object. 1. 'I am afraid it be presumption in me to believe in and apply Christ.'

Ans. It can never be presumption to obey an express and positive command of God. Is it presumption to pray? Is it presumption to read the word? Is it presumption to hear the word? Is it presumption to sanctify God's name? and is it presumption to remember the Sabbath? You do not reckon it presumption to do any of these, because ye are commanded of God; as little can it be presumption to 'believe in Christ, seeing this is his commandment,' 1 John iii. 21.

Object. 2. 'I am such a great sinner, that I am afraid it is not I who am commanded to believe.'

Ans. The command of believing is to all without exception, great sinners, and sinners of a lesser size; Isa. i. 8, 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' If the command of believing were not to every one, then unbelief would not be their sin; for 'where there is no law, there is no transgression,' Rom. v. 13. But unbelief is a sin of the deepest dye, and makes every sin else unpardonable, by rejecting the only remedy.

Object. 3. You tell us, 'That we are commanded to believe; and yet at the same time tell us that we want power to believe; that it is the work of God, John vi. 29. and that exceeding great and mighty power of God, that raised Christ from the dead, that must make us to believe.' Eph. i. 19, 20.

Ans. It is very true, ye cannot believe; 'No man can come to Christ, except the Father draw him,' John vi. 44. and yet ye are commanded to believe, not by us, but by that God that commands 'things that are not as though they were,' Rom. iv. 17. and he commands you, impotent sinners, 'dead in sin, to believe in the name of his Son;' that, from a sense of your own impotency you may turn the work upon himself, as 'the Author and Finisher of faith,' Heb. xii. 2. And his command is the vehicle of power: as when he commanded the man with the withered hand, 'Stretch forth thine hand,' Matth. xii. 13. the poor man attempted to obey, and in the attempt at obedience got power to stretch out his hand as he was commanded: so, after his example do ye. Attempt duty, depending on the power of him who commands you to believe, that he may 'fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power,' 2 Thess. i. 11.

Object 4. 'But all my labours will be in vain if I be not elected; for it is only they that are ordained to eternal life that will believe,' Acts xiii. 48.

Ans. It is true the election shall obtain, Rom. xi. 7. though others be hardened; but let me tell you, in the matter of believing, you have no more concern with the secret counsels of God, than you have in buying or selling, eating or drinking, or such like common actions of life. If any man should say, I will not open my shop-door, because I do not know if God has decreed that I should sell any wares; or, I do not know if God has ordained that any man should buy them: Or, if a man should say, I will neither eat nor drink, because God has fixed the term of my life: I am sure I shall live as long as God has ordained, whatever I do: Or, I may cast myself down a precipice, or attempt to walk upon the waters, because I shall not perish till God's appointed time come: I say, would you not reckon that man mad, or distracted, that would argue at that rate? Yet the case is the same when he argues, That he needs not fly to Christ, or enter into the New Testament ark, because if he be elected to eternal life he

shall never perish, whether he believe or not. Sirs, let not the devil and a deceitful heart lead you in among the decrees of God, which are secret; for 'the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children,' Deut. xxix. 29. Follow commanded duty: believe in the Son of God; and then you shall know your election of God.

IV. The fourth thing in the method, which was, to speak of the soul's actual entering by these doors into the New Testament ark. It does so by faith. 'By faith Noah, being warned of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark.'

I find faith expressed in scripture under the notion of entering, John x. 9, 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved,' and Heb. iv. 3, 'For we who have believed do enter into rest;' and ver. 7, 'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.' Of the same import is that expression of turning unto Christ as a stronghold or refuge, Zech. ix. 12.

All I shall say upon this head is, to illustrate a little the nature of faith, under the similitude of Noah's entering into the ark, and the creatures that were saved there with him.

1. Then, we see in the text, that Noah was *warned of God* of his danger before *he prepared an ark*, or fled unto it.

Just so is it with sinners in the matter of believing in Christ. God gives the sinner warning of the danger he is in of the wrath to come. As God gave public warning to the old world, by the ministry of Noah, of the approaching deluge: so by the word read and preached, particularly by the preaching of the law, there is warning given to all sinners of the danger they are in of perishing for ever. The voice of God in the law to sinners is, Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Rom. ii. 8, 9, 'Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.' Psal. ix. 17, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the

nations that forget God.—The wages of sin is death.' Now, these and the like warnings are carried in and brought home to the soul in particular, by the power of the eternal Spirit, before the sinner enters into the New Testament ark; and the sinner is made to believe the truth of these threatenings. For there is a law of faith, and a particular application of these and the like threatenings, before there be a true gospel faith of the remedy. Hence,

2. You see that Noah was *moved with fear* before he prepared an ark, or entered thereinto. What was he afraid of? say you. I answer, He was afraid of perishing in the deluge with the rest of the wicked world. 'He prepared an ark to the *saving* of his house.'

Just so is the case with sinners in the matter of believing, or flying to Christ; they are moved with the fear of an angry God, against whom they have sinned. And hence it is, that the sinner, through the terror of God, and of an awakened conscience, falls a trembling with the jailer, Acts xvi. 30. and cries, 'What must I do to be saved? Oh! to whom shall I fly for help, Isa. x. 3. 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? and who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. This is what is commonly called a law work, which every one that believes hath either in a greater or lesser degree: For 'The law is our schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith,' &c., Gal. iii. 24.

3. Noah *renounced all the false confidences* that the men of the old world betook themselves unto for shelter against the deluge. There is no doubt but the inhabitants of the old world, when they saw the 'windows of heaven opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the waters increasing and swelling,' would fly to the highest houses or mountains to save them from the waters of the deluge, in hopes that the waters would stay before they came up where they were. But Noah knew other things; he knew that these were but lying refuges, and that the

waters would overtop the highest mountains in the world : And therefore he renounced these vain refuges and betook himself unto the ark.

Just so is it in the matter of believing in Christ. The poor soul is made to see that 'in vain is salvation to be expected from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains,' Jer. iii. 23.—'That the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,' Isa. xxviii. 17.—And the waters overflow all these hiding places, which hypocrites, the carnal worldling, or legalist, betake themselves unto : and therefore it flies for refuge unto Christ, that blessed hope set before it, Heb. vi. 18., in the gospel, knowing that there is no name given—whereby to be saved, but by the name of Jesus.

4. Noah believed that the ark (being God's ordinance) was sufficient to *save him* and his family from the deluge.

So in the matter of believing, Christ is taken up as an all-sufficient Saviour, 'able also to save unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by him,' Heb. vii. 25; and as he is appointed and ordained of God to be a Saviour every way qualified for the salvation of lost sinners, and made of God 'unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption,' 1 Cor. i. 30.

5. God gave to the living creatures (that were to be saved alive in the ark) *a certain instinct*, which made them to move from all parts of the earth towards the ark, and at last to enter into it.

Just so is it in the matter of believing. God gives an instinct, a supernatural instinct, unto the poor sinner that makes him restless, until he win Christ, and be found in him, Phil. iii. 8, 9. This is nothing else but that drawing power of the word and Spirit of God, whereby the sinner is led to the Rock that is higher than all other refuges; John vi. 44, 'No man,' says Christ, 'can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him :' Hos. xi. 3, 'I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.' You know the bees, before a shower, by a certain instinct fly into the hive : just so is it here.

6. Noah's faith rested (not in the boards of the ark but) *in God* who had appointed him to prepare it.

So in the matter of believing, true faith terminates upon 'God—in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. The great design of God in manifesting himself in the flesh, is not that our faith should terminate upon the man Christ Jesus, but upon God in him. You have a word to this purpose, 1 Pet. i. 21, 'Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.' So that you see, the scope of the whole work of redemption (through Christ) is to bring us to trust in God, and to place our confidence in him, as a God with us. Sirs, remember that God alone is the object of faith; and if your faith terminate upon any thing inferior to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it is not saving faith, for it doth not answer the very first command of the law, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,' Exod. xx. 3.

7. When Noah entered into the ark, it was with a resolution to *abide there*, until the waters of the deluge were abated.

Just so is it here; when a sinner comes by faith unto Christ for refuge, he comes with a design to abide in him, not (like Noah with his ark) for a while, but for ever. The soul in believing cries concerning Christ, 'This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell;' Psal. cxxxii. 14. It is the will of Christ that we should abide in him, 1 John ii. 28, 'And now little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed, before him at his coming;' John xv. 4—7, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

V. The fifth thing in the method was to apply this doctrine.

And the only uses I make of the doctrine shall be in a word of trial and exhortation.

Use first shall be in a word of trial and examination.

And that which I would have you to try, is, Whether have you got into the New Testament ark Christ, where alone a sinner can be in safety from the deluge of divine wrath. I remember John the Baptist says unto the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. iii. 7, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' So say I to you, Have you, upon God's warning, by the word of the law, fled for refuge unto Christ, and taken up your residence and abode in him? I offer these few marks for trial.

1. If ever you have fled to the New Testament ark, you have seen the devouring deluge of God's wrath ready to swallow you up, and you have seen yourselves upon the very brink of perishing for ever in the deep waters, so that you have been made to cry out, Oh 'what shall I do to be saved?' Acts xvi. 30.

2. God has broken all your false props and confidences, and made you see they are nothing but lying refuges that would betray you. So was it with Paul at his conversion, 'what things were gain to him, these he counted loss for Christ,' Phil. iii. 7. 'Ashur shall not save us,' Hos. xiv. 3.

3. You have (by the light of the word and Spirit) got such a discovery of the glory, structure, beauty, and excellency, of the New Testament ark, as has filled you with wonder and admiration at the love, mercy, and grace of God, in providing such an ark, such a Saviour. 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' Oh, will the soul say, at the sight of the ark Christ, 'What hath God wrought?' Numb. xxiii. 23; 'This is the Lord's doing, it is wonderful in our eyes,' Psal. cxviii. 23; 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh!' &c. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

4. If ever you have entered into the ark, you have seen a reconciled God in the ark Christ, 'For God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. This is the very thing that induces and encourages the soul to enter into it. The poor soul could see nothing before, but God a devouring flame to consume it; but, looking to Christ, it sees a smiling God, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' Matth. xvii. 5. O Sirs, this is the very thing that begets faith, love, hope, and confidence, God's love in giving Christ, John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,' &c. Now have you seen God to be love? and have you seen his love manifested in this, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him? 1 John iv. 9. and has the faith of this love killed your enmity?

5. If you have fled to the New Testament ark, you will be so well pleased with your new lodging, and your safety therein, that your hearts will be filled with gratitude, and your tongues with the high praises of the Lord, that ever provided such an ark, and that ever brought you into it. You will sing and say with the church, Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of thine heritage;' and with David, Psal ciii. at the beginning, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:' and with Israel, when God had brought them through the Red sea, and delivered them from the hand of the Egyptians, Exod. xv. 11, 'I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously,' &c.

6. If you have ever fled into the ark, then you will be new creatures; for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away, 2 Cor. v. 17. You have got new light in your understanding, a new will and affections, you will not walk according to your old lusts in the flesh, or according to the course of the world; no, but as the ark and they that were in it were lifted up above the earth upon the waters, towards heaven, so you will not lie

grovelling upon the earth, but 'seek things that are above, where Christ is,' Col. iii. 1.

7. You have got something of the Spirit of Christ: for 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his,' Rom. viii. 9. 'But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit,' 1 Cor. vi. 17. And his Spirit will be in you as 'a well of water springing up unto everlasting life,' John iv. 14. The Spirit will convince you of sin, &c.

8. If you have fled to the New Testament ark, you will be concerned to get as many as possible into the ark with you; and for this end you will be telling them of their danger while out of Christ, and of the great salvation that is to be found in him. How active was Paul, after he came to know Christ, to recommend him to others? Acts ix. 20, &c. compared with Gal. i. 23.

Use second shall be of exhortation to all in general.

Is it so that Christ is our great New Testament ark, to save from the deluge of divine wrath? O then, Sirs, let me beseech and entreat you to consult your own safety, by flying into his blessed ark, before the waters of the deluge sweep you away into a miserable eternity.

I offer a few motives to stir you up to fly into the ark.

1. There is a fixed day, a time set for your entering into the New Testament ark, which if it be let slip, there will be no entrance into the ark, but you shall infallibly perish in the deluge. 'He that lives for ever, has sworn with his hand lifted up to heaven,' that there shall be no more entrance into the ark. Quest. What is the fixed time? Ans. It is the day of grace, the day of life, the day of salvation; if that pass, you are gone for ever: and therefore, 'To-day, if you will hear his voice,' Psal. xcv. and Heb. iii.

2. The ark is prepared of God for you, and that at an infinite expense. God has provided a Saviour, Psal. lxxxix. 19, 'Help is laid upon one that is mighty;' John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish.' The ark is finished and perfected, and made ready for you: 'All things are ready,' Matth. xxii. 4.

3. The ark is at hand, it is near to us, Isa. xlvi. at the close, Behold, 'I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion,' &c. 'The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach,' Rom. x. 8.

4. The ark is ordained for men and women of our stamp, I mean men and women of the human nature: And therefore the call is 'to men and the sons of men,' Prov. viii. 4. Christ is a Saviour, not for the fallen angels, but for us: 'Unto us is this child born,' Isa. ix. 6.; he 'is made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. i. 30.

5. Many have already entered, and are saved; an innumerable company, 'which no man can number,' Rev. vii.

6. The doors of the ark are cast wide open to you also, together with a promise of safety, 'Whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life,' John iii. 16.

7. The great God commands you to enter into the ark, 1 John iii. 23, 'This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.'

I conclude with a word to believers who have fled into the ark.

(1.) By way of comfort.

1. God is with you in the ark, 'For God is in Christ,' 2 Cor. v. 19. and he will never leave you, Heb. xii. 5.

2. 'Your life is hid with Christ in God,' Col. iii. 3. 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' John xiv. 19.

3. You are freed from condemnation. The law cannot curse you; though man may, yet God will not curse you, Rom. viii. 1.

4. The waters of affliction shall not overwhelm you, Isa. xliii. 2, 3.; the waves may dash, but they will turn into foam like the waves of the sea.

5. Death and the grave cannot harm you, 'For you are ransomed from the power of both,' Hos. xiii. 14.

(2.) A word of counsel to you that are in the ark.

1. Bless God that provided the ark.

2. Bless God that brought you into it.
3. Rejoice and glory in the Lord, triumph in him.
4. Live upon Christ and the provision you find in the ark.
5. Walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well-pleasing, Col. i. 10.

SERMON IV.

THE RAINBOW OF THE COVENANT.

And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.—Rev. iv. 3.

NOT to stand in the entry, we may notice here three things which John saw in a vision. 1. *A throne set in heaven*, in the close of the second verse. 2. The glorious Majesty that *sat on the throne*, who was *like a jasper and a sardine stone* for brightness. 3. The canopy of the throne, *a rainbow round about it, in colour like unto an emerald*. I understand the whole of this to have a respect immediately to the church militant here upon earth, and the glorious dispensation of the grace of God under the New Testament economy. And that which inclines me to understand it in this view is, because this vision is prophetic, and has a respect to things that were to be done afterward, as you see in the 1st verse, ‘Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter;’ that is, things which were to be transacted in the church in the succeeding ages and generations of the world.

Therefore by the *throne* here that was set in heaven, I understand the *throne of grace*, to which we are invited to come ‘with boldness for grace and mercy to help in time of need,’ Heb. iv. 16; the throne which hath justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God, for its basis and foundation, Psal. lxxxix. 14; the throne of God and of the Lamb, from which proceeds ‘a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,’ Rev. xxii. 1. And this

throne is said to be *set in heaven*. Not as if God's throne of grace were only in heaven properly so called; for we find the church militant on earth frequently expressed by heaven in scripture. She—to wit, the church—is called in Heb. xii. 22. *the heavenly Jerusalem*, and in 1 Pet. ii. 9. *a holy nation*. And therefore by *heaven* here we may understand the church of God in general. By him that *sits on the throne*, I understand Christ, or God in our nature, not excluding the Father and the Holy Ghost; for it is 'the throne of God and of the Lamb.' We have the same description of a throne in a vision, in Ezek. i. 26. and are told, that 'above upon the throne was the appearance of a man,' which can be applied to none other than the man Christ Jesus; and there is no doubt but it is the same throne, and the same person sitting on it, that was seen both by Ezekiel, and the apostle John. As for his posture, he is represented as *sitting upon the throne*. This points at the perpetuity of his government, that he is in quiet possession of it, it being for ever out of the power of his enemies to disturb his administration. We are told here further, that his appearance upon the throne was *like a jasper and a sardine stone*. These stones being unknown to us, we shall not take up time in telling you what is said about them by naturalists, and some curious interpreters; only we may state in short, that the *jasper* is a bright transparent stone, representing to the eye a variety of the most vivid or lively colours, and the *sardine* is said to be red. The scope is plainly this, to point out the admirable and inconceivable glory and excellency of an exalted Christ. Such is the brightness of the Father's glory shining in him, now when he is upon the throne, that all the precious things on earth put together are but faint shadows and representations of his divine glory and excellency. The brightness of the *jasper*, and the redness of the *sardine stone*, are put together, to show that he is *white and ruddy*; white in his divine, ruddy in his human nature; white in his holiness, red in his suffering: the bright and glorious perfections of God, shining through the rent veil of his human nature,

do as it were receive a tincture of red from the veil through which they are transmitted.

But now I come to that part of John's vision which I have principally in view, and that is the canopy of state which covers the throne, and him that sat on it, in the close of the 3d verse: *And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*

Here I conceive there is a manifest allusion to God's covenant with Noah, Gen. ix. When God called back the waters of the deluge from off the face of the earth, he made a promise, and bound himself by covenant that he would never 'destroy the earth any more by water;' and in token of his faithfulness in this matter, he set *his bow in the clouds*. With allusion to this, God's throne of grace, or his mercy seat, from which all the promises of the covenant do proceed, is said to be surrounded with *a rainbow*; to signify, that as God deals with his people in the way of a covenant, so his faithfulness in that covenant is 'established in the very heavens.' And this bow surrounding the throne is said to be *in colour like unto an emerald*, that is, of a green colour; to signify, that his covenant, by virtue of the faithfulness of him that sits upon the throne, is ever the same, without any shadow of turning. 'The fashion of this world withereth and passeth away; but the word of the Lord,' his word of grace and promise, 'it endureth for ever.'

The doctrine I take notice of from the words is this.

Doct. 'That God's covenant of grace, and his faithfulness engaged therein, is like a beautiful rainbow surrounding the throne of grace, for the encouragement of our faith and trust in him that sits on it.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, do these things following.

I. Offer a few thoughts respecting the covenant of grace or promise.

II. Take a view of this covenant, under the similitude of *a rainbow in colour like unto an emerald* surrounding the throne of grace.

III. Show what it is to improve this *rainbow* of the covenant.

IV. Apply the whole.

I. The first thing proposed is, to offer a few thoughts respecting the covenant of grace and promise. And,

1. I remark, that *the occasion* of the covenant of grace, like that of God's covenant with Noah, was a deluge of wrath, which broke out upon Adam and all his family, for the breach and violation of the covenant of works. This is what is pointed at, Ezek. xvi. 4—8. where you see that that which gave occasion to God's entering into a covenant of grace, was that miserable estate man had brought himself into by sin. 'When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.'

Here it may readily be asked, What is that state we are reduced unto by the breach of the first covenant? I answer, it is a state *of sin*. Sin, like a contagion, has overrun all men, and the whole man from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. It is a state *of alienation and estrangement* from God. We are 'alienated from the very life of God, through the ignorance that is in us;' like the prodigal, we have gone into a far country, and care not for returning to our Father's house. Yea more, it is a state *of enmity and hostility against God*. The carnal mind is enmity against God; we are 'enemies in our minds by wicked works.' It is a state *worse than Egyptian darkness*. We are not simply in the dark, but we are darkness itself: 'Once ye were darkness.' It is a state *of impotency and weakness*. 'For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for us.' It is a state *of bondage and captivity to sin*, Satan, and the world. We are led captive by these potent enemies. It is a *cursed and condemned state*. We are 'condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on us.' It is a *state of death*. We are dead spiritually,

under the power of sin, and lying upon the very borders of eternal death. Now, this is the condition we are reduced unto by the fall. But infinite mercy and love takes occasion from this miserable and ruined estate of man, to enter into a new covenant, even a covenant of grace, in order to his deliverance.

2. I remark, that *the rise and spring* of this covenant of grace was not foreseen faith or good works, or any thing else in the creature; but only the free and surprising love of God. John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Jer. xxxi. 3, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.' This love of God to lost sinners was altogether and absolutely *free*; free in opposition to merit, free in opposition to constraint. It had no other cause but only the freedom of his own will, Eph. i. 4, 5. And as it is free, so it is superlatively *great*; love that *passeth knowledge*; love which hath a height and depth, a breadth and length, which can never be fathomed or found out. It is *distinguishing* love. It lighted upon men, when it passed by angels that fell; it lighted upon some of Adam's family, when it passed by others.

3. I remark, that this covenant of grace, *in the original make and constitution of it*, was transacted with Christ as a new covenant head, a public person, representing all the spiritual seed which the Lord had given him. For, Sirs, you must know, that since the fall of man, God never entered into any covenant with him directly and immediately, but only by the intervention of a Surety and Mediator. Hence in our Larger Catechism, in answer to that question, 'With whom was the covenant of grace made?' the answer is, that it was made with Christ, and with the elect in him as his seed. Hence it is that we read of 'grace given us in Christ, before the world began.' In this covenant there are some things that relate particularly to Christ himself as Surety and Redeemer, and some things

in it that relate to the members and seed of Christ. The Father having promised sufficient furniture and through-bearing to his Son, both for the purchase and application of our redemption; the Son not only undertakes to satisfy justice, to fulfil the law, to bruise the head of the old serpent, but also by his Spirit, which he would send into their hearts, to sprinkle them with clean water, to take away the stony heart, to enlighten them, to justify them, to adopt and sanctify them, and at last to present them 'without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.' And when all this comes to be revealed and set forth in a gospel dispensation, what is incumbent upon us, but to subscribe to this glorious transaction and plan of redemption that was laid by Infinite Wisdom? Thus, I say, the covenant of grace was originally transacted with Christ, and with us in him, and through him.

4. I remark, that the revelation of this covenant of grace, transacted with Christ before the world began, *was made very early to our first parents in Paradise*, immediately after the fall: Gen. iii. 15, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.' Here it was that the grand secret, which lay in the breast of God, did first break forth. When our first parents were waiting, with a trembling heart, every moment for the execution of the sentence of the broken covenant of works, behold glad tidings of great joy are issued out from a throne of grace, namely, that in the fulness of time, the Son of God was to become the seed of the woman, and bruise the serpent's head, to destroy the devil and his works, and redeem man from that gulf of misery into which he was plunged. This was the covenant of grace. And it is remarkable, that in its first edition it came forth in a promise of Christ. This was enlarged and explained to Abraham, Moses, David, and yet more fully opened after the Babylonish captivity, by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets, till Christ himself actually came, in whom all the Old Testament types, prophecies, and promises, received their full accomplishment. And having by his death 'confirmed the covenant with many,'

the covenant of grace came forth after his resurrection and exaltation in its last and best edition; namely, in the form of a testament, having the two great sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper appended to it, as full and uncontested evidences of its being confirmed by his death. This glorious charter has now passed the seal, and therefore faith may make use of it with boldness.

5. I remark, that this covenant of grace, or testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be viewed and considered *in its dispensation or exhibition*. God, in his infinite wisdom, for reaching the great end and design of a covenant of grace, has appointed ordinances, the word, sacraments, and prayer, and other proper means, by which the benefits of his death and blessings of his covenant may come to be actually applied to us; he has authorized ministers to dispense word and sacraments, that by these, as through conduit pipes, his grace and fulness may be communicated to us. And here it should be remembered, that the covenant of grace, in the dispensation and exhibition of it, comes to every man's door; it is presented as the ground and foundation of faith in common to all the hearers of the gospel, elect and reprobate. We call all and every one to take hold of God's covenant, and tell them, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent: The promise (or covenant) is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.'

6. I remark, that this covenant of grace may be considered in the *application and execution of it*. And this is either initial, progressive, or consummate. (1.) I say, there is the initial application, or the soul's first entry into the bond of the covenant; that is, the Spirit of the great new covenant Head having taken hold of the poor soul, the soul at the same moment takes hold of the covenant by faith, and receives it as a good and sufficient security for that life and happiness which was lost by the sin of the first Adam. This is in scripture called *the day of espousals*, wherein the soul does, as it were, sign and subscribe the marriage contract, saying, *I am the Lord's*. (2.) There is the further

improvement of this covenant of grace, for the soul's daily supply in a way of believing, whereby it is made to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This is called a 'drawing water with joy out of the wells of salvation.' The believer finding himself under this and the other want, improves the promises of the covenant as they are suited and adapted to his case. And thus the work of sanctification is daily advanced: 'they shall go from strength to strength.' (3.) There is the full execution of the designs of this covenant when the soul is brought to glory, and 'presented faultless before the presence of God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.' 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.' At that day, the covenant and all the concerns of it is fully executed and performed, even *the day of Jesus Christ*: Phil. i. 6, 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' So much for the first thing proposed, which was, to give you some views of the covenant of grace.

II. The second thing was to take a view of the covenant of grace, under the similitude of 'a rainbow round about the throne.' Now, I would say that the similitude intimates such things as the following.

1st. That the *first covenant is broken*, and that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth. For which cause the fountains of the great deep of God's wrath were opened like a mighty sea, sweeping all Adam's family to the bottomless pit. When we see the bow in the heavens, we remember the flood of Noah, which was sent to take vengeance upon the old world for their sin; so when we view the rainbow of the covenant, we should remember the flood of divine wrath and vengeance that is broken out against the whole family and race of mankind. O Sirs, the broad flying roll of the curse of God is gone forth over the face of the whole earth, because of the sin of man: Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Remember

this when you see the bow of the covenant of grace round about the throne of grace.

2dly. The representation intimates *that a ransom is found out*, and that the sacrifice of our great Noah is accepted; that God has smelled a sweet savour in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know the rainbow was set up in the heavens after God had accepted of Noah's sacrifice; and when we see God's bow in the clouds, we remember this. So, when we look upon a covenant of grace, we ought to remember the death and satisfaction of Jesus as the very ground and foundation of God's dealing with sinners in a way of grace. When we behold the covenant, we should behold the blood of the covenant, behold the red streams of this rainbow, Zech. ix. 11, 'By the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water.' I have read, that in Holland, where most of their country is taken off the sea by strong dykes, if the sea at any time happen to make a breach, whereby the country is in danger of being laid under water, any man that observes the breach, is by the law of the country ordered to stop the breach as soon as possible, though it were with his most valuable packs of goods, and he has reparation from the community. O Sirs, sin has made a breach for the inundation of God's wrath to break in upon the whole race of Adam; and the breach was so wide, and the current of wrath so rapid and strong, that it would have swallowed up and swept away the whole creation of angels and men if they had been cast in to stop it. The glorious Son of God, perceiving that nothing else would do it, cast his own body into the breach; 'he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' Let us remember this when we look at the bow about the throne.

3dly. The bow of the covenant, as it is set up in the heaven of the visible church, intimates that *the deluge of God's wrath is recalled*, and that God is a God of peace toward sinners, through the atoning blood of the Lamb. God's bow in the clouds is a security against the waters of the deluge, that they shall never return any more to destroy

the earth; and indeed the bow in the heaven is a greater security against this than the sands and rocks wherewith it is surrounded. So the covenant of grace, founded upon and sealed with the blood of the Lamb, is a glorious security against the devouring deluge of divine wrath, that it shall never return to destroy any soul that by faith flees to Christ, and takes shelter under the covert of his blood and righteousness. Whenever a man sees the rainbow, it yields him peace and safety against the fears of another deluge, though never so great hurricanes or tempests were blowing out of the heavens. Though the sea were roaring, and its waves swelling, as though it would swallow up the dry land, yet the sight of God's bow in the clouds puts us out of fear of an universal deluge. So here, whenever a poor soul by faith takes a view of the bow of the covenant, surrounding God's throne of grace, it gives him peace. He is made to see, that whatever be God's dispensations, whatever be the appearance of his providences, yet the deluge of his vindictive wrath having spent itself upon the Surety, justice itself becomes the sinner's security, by virtue of the covenant of grace: Isa. liv. 9, 'For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.' Sirs, I bring you glad tidings of great joy; the waters of the deluge of God's wrath are so far abated and fallen, that the olive branch is brought forth to your view by God's ministers. We preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things to you; we tell you in the name of God, that he is so well pleased with the ransom that he has found, that he declares *fury is not in him*, that *though he was angry, his anger is now turned away*. And if ye will not believe his word, take his oath for it, in which he has pawned his very life: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'

4thly. The emblematical representation still farther intimates God's *faithful promise*, that no man shall be ruined

by an universal deluge. Indeed, if a man stand within the sea-mark till the waters of the sea overflow him, there is no help for that. God's faithfulness in his covenant with Noah stands firm though the man perish. So here, the rainbow about the throne of grace is a sign of God's faithfulness in a word of promise, that no man shall perish who will take the advantage of the dry land that stands before him in the gospel. Indeed, if a man will by unbelief stand still within the sea-mark of God's wrath till he perish, there is no help for that; but the faithfulness of God in the covenant of grace stands firm, and shall not be made of none effect through his folly. But I say, whosoever believeth, or taketh hold of the faithfulness of God pledged in his covenant, shall not perish, but have everlasting life; the deluge of wrath shall never touch him.

5thly. The representation intimates that *all men without exception have access* to the blessings of the covenant. God's bow in the clouds is very extensive, reaching from the one end of heaven to the other; so God's covenant of grace is a large and wide covenant. Though all Adam's posterity were gathered together, there would be room for them within the arches of the rainbow. God's covenant of grace is a large and wide covenant; there is room in it for you, room for me, and room for all mankind. God's voice is to every one to take hold of it, for every one to come within the circuit of it: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money let him come. *You that have spent your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which profiteth not,*' ye are called to take hold of it, Isa. lv. 1, 2. And as all in general, so every one in particular, is warranted to take hold of it. Although the arch of the bow is high above us, reaching to the heaven, yet the extremes of it stoop down to the earth, and come near to every man; yea, one would think, wherever he is, or whatever place of the world he is in, still the end of the rainbow is pointing towards him. Just so it is with the covenant of grace; although the great covenant Head be in heaven, yet the covenant itself

stoops down to men upon earth. Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, 'Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead) but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach.' Herein God brings near his righteousness to us. Yea, the covenant of grace, in the dispensation of it, like the bow in the clouds, points to every man, saying, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent.'

Lastly. It is intimated that the rainbow of the covenant is of *divine origination*. The natural rainbow was of God's setting: 'I have set my bow in the clouds.' So the covenant of grace is of God's making: 'I have made a covenant with my chosen. Hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will never turn away from them to do them good.' Beware of thinking that the covenant is of your making. It is indeed your duty to take hold of God's covenant, and to come under engagements, through the grace thereof, to observe all the duties commanded in the law. But do not think that your engaging, or promising and covenanting, do make or constitute the covenant of grace: no, it is God that both makes the covenant and leads our heart and hand in taking hold of it, and in engaging to these duties of obedience which are consequential unto our being in covenant with the Lord. Heb. viii. 10, 'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.' The covenant of grace is as much of God's making as the forming of the bow in the clouds, which cannot be done by the hands of men.

III. The third thing was to show what it is to improve the rainbow of the covenant.

Now this, as it is well expressed in our Confession of Faith, 'is to believe in Christ, or to accept, receive, and

rest upon him alone, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.' This is a very material expression, and I fear little noticed by the generality of people; *a resting upon Christ, by virtue of the covenant of grace.* As we rest upon a man by virtue of his word or promise, so we rest upon Christ by virtue of the covenant and the promises thereof. It is observable here in the text, that the rainbow is round about the throne and him that sits on it; so that there could be no coming to the throne, or Christ sitting on it, without coming within the rainbow; no coming to Christ, no true believing in him, but by virtue of his word of grace and promise in a covenant of grace. And this is one main difference between true saving faith and the presumptuous faith of hypocrites. Hypocrites, by a presumptuous faith, will indeed catch at Christ and salvation; but in the mean time they do not receive Christ and his benefits as they lie within the rainbow, they do not receive and improve him by virtue of the covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace, or the promise of God in Christ, is his testament, bond, or disposition, wherein he assigns and makes over himself, his righteousness, his Spirit, his fulness, and all the blessings of his purchase; and true faith receives and rests upon Christ by virtue of this covenant of grace. I defy you either to fasten your faith or trust upon God or man without a word of promise to ground your faith upon. If I should bid you trust or believe your neighbour, or any responsible man, for a sum of money that you stand in need of, you would ask me, Why, what ground have I to trust him? has he promised to give it or lend it to me? If he has not promised to do it there is no ground of trust; and you would think that I were but mocking you when I bid you trust him for it, unless he has passed his word. So here when we bid you believe in Christ, receive him, or rest upon him for salvation, your eye must immediately be turned to the word of grace or promise, and his faithfulness engaged in it; for it is by virtue of that that we receive him, or approve and apply him to

our own souls: hence believing in Christ is expressed by a 'taking hold of God's covenant,' Isa. lvi. 4.; which expression plainly implies a fastening on the veracity or faithfulness of God pledged in the covenant. For more particularly clearing of this, I shall go no further than the representation made in the text. What you think when the rainbow appears in the heavens, the same you are to do with relation to the bow in the covenant, and the faithfulness of God engaged in it.

1. When the bow appears in the heaven, *you behold it*, you look upon it with your eyes, for it is a beautiful appearance; you consider and inquire for what end there is such an appearance in the heavens. Now, the same you are to do with God's covenant of grace,—the bow that he has set in the heaven of his church, about his throne of grace which he has reared up. It is absolutely impossible that ever you can reap any benefit by God's covenant unless you behold it, consider it, and study to know and understand it. There must be an uptaking of the secrets of the covenant. And this is the first thing that ever God does when he is to bring the soul within the bond of his covenant; he enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ, the great covenant Head—makes the man to think upon and consider the fulness and freedom, the comely order and stability of the covenant, as a covenant of grace and peace, having all our salvation wrapped up in it.

2. When a man sees the rainbow in the heaven, and knows that it is a token of God's covenant with mankind, that the waters shall not return to destroy the earth, *he assents to the truth of the covenant or promise of God*. He believes that it is true that God made such a promise, and that God who promised such a thing will not break his word, but that he will make it good. So here, when you see the bow of the covenant of grace, and the veracity of God pawned therein,—when you see it sealed with the oath of God and the blood of his eternal Son, your duty is to assent to the truth of God pledged in the covenant, because he has 'righteousness for the girdle of his loins, and faith-

fulness for the girdle of his reins.' O, will the soul say, I see every promise of God to be true, it is impossible for him to lie; and therefore I set to my seal that he is true.

3. When a man sees the bow in the cloud, *he concludes that he himself in particular is safe* from the waters of the sea, that they shall not overflow him; he rests upon the veracity of the Promiser, and so makes himself easy against the fears of a second deluge. So here, when we see God's covenant like a bow surrounding his throne, we should rest with assured confidence upon it as a good security against wrath, a good security for our everlasting happiness, for peace, pardon, grace, and glory. The covenant is God's charter for eternal life, and the soul accordingly takes it, and says, *This is all my salvation, that he hath made with me in Christ an everlasting covenant, and in this will I be confident.* Indeed, if God can break his covenant I am undone, I will sink in the mighty waters of his wrath; but God's covenant cannot be broken; it stands fast for ever; the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his peace shall never be removed; and therefore I am sure God will not betray me, his covenant will not deceive me. And all this is just what is called 'a taking hold of God's covenant,' Isa. lvi. 4.

IV. I proceed now to the application of the subject.

Is it so, that the covenant of grace, and the faithfulness of God engaged therein, is like *a rainbow round about the throne, in colour like unto an emerald?* Then my exhortation to all hearing me is, to answer the design, and improve this manifestation and display of the grace of God. Why has he set the rainbow of his covenant round about his throne, but that sinners who are far off may be encouraged to come and enter within God's covenant, and take hold of his faithfulness pledged therein, that they may 'obtain mercy, and find grace at a throne of grace, to help them in time of need?' Sirs, when you see the bow in the clouds, you remember God's covenant with Noah, and believe that you are safe against a second deluge of water, not for any good deed done by you to deserve such a thing,

but because of the veracity of God pledged in his covenant with Noah. So when you see the bow of the covenant about a throne of grace, improve it as a security against the deluge of wrath, which was stopped and recalled upon the satisfaction and death of Christ; improve it, I say, for this and all the other blessings that lie wrapped up in the large bosom thereof. And to engage you to this, consider,—

1st. God *commands you* to lay hold on his covenant: 1 John iii. 23, ‘This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.’ Now, when God bids you believe in Christ, he bids you believe in him by virtue of the covenant of grace, or by virtue of the free promise of life through Christ to perishing sinners. Oh, essay it in the strength of him that commands you. The very first command warrants you, yea, obligeth you to have a God in Christ, and none other, as your God. Now, this command is to all and every one; and if it were not so, it would needs follow that there are some in whom unbelief were no sin; for where there is no law, there can be no transgression. But depend upon it, Sirs, that unbelief is your sin, and the great sin upon which the sentence of condemnation will run against you at the great day; and if unbelief be your sin, then it is your indispensable duty, by the command of God, to believe on Christ, or to trust in him for salvation, by virtue of his faithfulness engaged in the bow of the covenant that is about the throne of grace.

2dly. Let *the indefinite extent of the rainbow encourage and warrant you* to come within it. The natural rainbow reaches from one end of the heaven to the other; but O, Sirs, the grace of God in a covenant of grace is much wider and larger, for it reaches forth its arms to clasp every creature in its bosom, Mark xvi. 15, 16. The voice of a God of grace is to *men*, and the *sons of men*, to take hold of his covenant, to improve his faithfulness in the rainbow against this the deluge of his wrath: Isa. lv. 1, 2, ‘Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no

money ; let him come. Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?' The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is conceived in the form of a blank bond, or testamentary deed, where there is room left to every man to fill up his name, by the hand of faith. The strain and tenor of it is, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people : I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh : I will sprinkle clean water upon them : I will put my Spirit within them : I will be merciful to their unrighteousness : I will subdue their iniquities.' Here, you see, the grant runs in an indefinite way, no man's name mentioned, neither any by name excluded. Why, what is the design of this, but that every man may be encouraged to subscribe his name, or to make application thereof to his own soul, in a way of believing, by which we are said to *take hold of God's covenant* ? O Sirs ! the covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, (for now I abstract from his secret purposes, which are not at all the measure or rule of faith,) is just like a rope cast in among a company of drowning men ; he that throws it in, cries to every one of them to take hold of the rope, promising to draw them safe to shore. So God, in the gospel dispensation, proposes his covenant to every one as a ground of faith, assuring them, that whosoever takes hold of his covenant, and receives his Christ, whom he hath 'given for a covenant of the people, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' For the Lord's sake, do not put this rope of salvation away from you, under a pretence that ye know not if it be designed for you. Would you not reckon it ridiculous madness in any of these drowning men now mentioned, to fall a disputing whether the rope were cast in to them, when they are at the very point of sinking to the bottom ? Would not every one of them catch at it with the utmost strength and vigour, without putting any question ? Now, this is thy very case, O sinner. Thou art going down to the pit of eternal misery ; God, by his ministers, cries to you to

take hold of this rope of salvation: O then! 'see that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven;' do not dispute yourselves away from your own mercy.

3dly. The *nature of the throne*, and the *nature of the rainbow*, invite and encourage your faith and trust. The throne is of the nature with the rainbow; the throne is a throne of grace, and the covenant a covenant of grace. What sort of a throne is a throne of grace? It is a throne for beggars and bankrupts to come to, that they may get whatsoever they want freely; it is a throne that stands by out-giving, by giving liberally to all *without upbraiding*. What sort of a covenant is a covenant of grace? The very name of it tells you what is its nature; a covenant of grace can be nothing else but an absolute free grant of all the riches of grace that lie about the throne of grace. If any thing were required of us as a condition of our taking or receiving the blessings of the covenant, it would that moment cease to be a covenant of grace. But, say you, is not faith the condition of the covenant? Ans. I will be loath to condemn that way of speaking, because worthy men have used it, and do use it in a sound sense. But, Sirs, I would have you to remember, that when it is called a condition, all that such worthy learned men mean by it, is only this, that you can have no saving benefit or advantage by Christ unless he be received; you can have no benefit by God's covenant or promise, unless you believe the promise to be true, and believe it with application to your own souls. Faith is just such a condition as shows the inseparable connexion between one thing and another. As if you should say to a beggar, there is your alms, on the condition that you take it; there is meat, on the condition you eat it; there is a good bond for a sum of money, on condition that you trust him that granted it. Or, as if I should say to one, thou shalt have the benefit of the light of the sun, on condition thou open thine eyes to see it; or the ground will bear you, on condition you lay your weight upon it. Now, such a condition of the covenant of grace is faith; it is just a taking what is freely given without money and

price : and let it be remembered, that itself is one of the blessings promised in this covenant. Now, I say, let the nature of the throne, and the nature of the rainbow of the covenant, encourage and warrant you to come and trust in a God of grace. I make but a supposition, that a great and rich king should erect a throne in the open field, and emit a proclamation for all beggars, bankrupts, and people in wants and straits, to come to his throne, and they should get whatever they needed: O what a gathering would there be! with what confidence would needy people flock thither, and ask what they wanted, especially if the king had sworn by his life that they should be served! Well, this is the very case; the throne of grace is only a throne for the needy, for rich folk are sent empty away: and the bow about the throne is just the faithfulness of God engaged in a free promise, that come to him who will, 'he will in no wise cast them out.' O then take the advantage, and trust his promise, and you have the thing promised, for his promise is as good as payment.

4thly. Will you but take a view of *the name of him that sits upon the throne* within the rainbow, and let that encourage your faith, hope, and expectation. O Sirs, 'they that know his name will put their trust in him;' his name that sits on the throne is a *strong tower*, to which the sinner *may flee*, and to which the saints 'do flee and are safe.' See what his name is, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 'The Lord, the Lord God,' JEHOVAH EL, 'the strong God, able to do *for thee* exceeding abundantly above what *thou* canst ask or think.' He stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and does whatever pleases him in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and therefore is able to do for thee whatever thou askest of him, yea, more than thou canst ask. Abraham by faith stayed himself upon the power of a promising God without staggering, Rom. iv. 20, 21. Again, his name is *merciful*; and therefore may you say, Will he not answer his name, and extend mercy, considering that misery is the only proper object of mercy, and I am wretched, miserable, poor, and

blind, and naked? David's faith found footing in this name of a God in Christ, when he could not stand before the bar of the law, Psal. cxxx. 4, 'But there is mercy with thee: that thou mayest be feared.' Again, his name who sits upon the throne within the rainbow is *gracious*; and it is the very nature of grace, as I said, to give, and to give freely. Grace is that attribute of the divine nature which shall be celebrated through eternity; this world is but a theatre on which he designs the manifestations of his grace. May not this encourage thee to go within the circuit of the rainbow, and ask grace and mercy to help thee in time of need? Unbelief indeed, will tell thee, that 'the Lord has forgotten to be gracious;' but it is not so, for he cannot forget his own name. Unbelief will tell thee that thou art unworthy of his grace, and this will hinder thee from coming speed; but that cannot be either, for grace is most grace when it is extended to the most unworthy. Thus, I say, draw encouragement from the name of him that sits upon the throne within the rainbow.

5thly. It is for *the honour and glory of God* that you improve the rainbow of the covenant, for your security against the deluge of wrath, and for obtaining the blessings that lie within the bosom thereof. Hereby ye glorify his power, being persuaded that he is able to make good what he has promised. Hereby you glorify his holiness, which is pawned to the great covenant head, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, pledged in the covenant to him and his seed. Hereby you glorify his justice by acquiescing in that righteousness or justice which is the foundation of his throne. Hereby you glorify his mercy, and join with him in saying, 'Mercy shall be built up for ever.' Hereby you glorify his truth and faithfulness, by setting to your seal that God is true. In a word, you give him the glory of your salvation, saying, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever;' the language of faith is, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory.'

6thly. *The extent of the blessings* contained in the cove-

nant should excite and encourage your faith. All the blessings of heaven and eternity lie within the wide circuit of this rainbow of the covenant, which surrounds God's throne of grace. All grace whatsoever lay originally in the heart of God; but as it lies there, it is inaccessible by sinners, 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord?' Well, because that grace that is in God's heart is inaccessible by us, therefore he brings it yet nearer to us, by taking a piece of our nature, uniting it to the person of his eternal Son, and calls it *Christ, Messiah, Immanuel, God-man, or God with us*; and makes all the fulness of the Godhead, all the grace that is in his heart, to dwell there, that so we might not be afraid to come to one in our nature for grace and mercy to help us. But that our faith might yet have a greater advantage, he does not rest there, but he brings all the grace that is in Christ into a promise, or a covenant of grace,—pledges his faithfulness in the strongest way imaginable in the promise or covenant, that so unbelief might have nothing to object. Unbelief might be ready to say, It is true, there is enough of grace in Christ, but alas! he is in heaven, and he has carried all his grace to heaven with him; and the throne on which he now sits is so high, that I know not how to reach him. But, says the Lord, O sinner, say not so, think not so; for all the fulness of Christ is nigh thee in the rainbow of my covenant. I give thee a word of faith, a faithful word of promise, lean to that, rest on that, and Christ, and all that is in him, and all the grace that is in my heart, shall come along with it into thy soul. What is it, O sinner, thou wantest, but thou mayest have it either in title or possession, by resting on the veracity of him who has set his bow in the clouds?

But, may the sinner say, though there be noble encouragement, and the best warrant in the world for believing or coming within the covenant, yet,—

Object. 1. *I am a poor unworthy creature*, I dare not think of meddling with God's covenant. Ans. It is a bastard devilish humility that keeps you from believing; for the more unworthy you are of the grace and favour of God, the

more fit you are for receiving the grace of God at a throne of grace, by virtue of the covenant of grace. Grace is only calculated for the unworthy sinner, and not for those that think themselves worthy of it.

Object. 2. *My sins are like the great mountains*, and I fear the grace of God will never level them. Ans. Take hold of God's covenant, and you shall find these mountains removed, and cast into the midst of the sea: Isa. i. 18, 'Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

Object. 3. *I want a law work*, I am not weary and heavy laden, and therefore am not fit to take hold of God's covenant. Ans. If thou thinkest to make a law work and humiliation a price in your hand to recommend you to Christ, and fit you for him, I tell you, that instead of fitting yourself for Christ, you are building up a wall between Christ and you that you shall never get over. If you see an absolute need of Christ, and that you are undone without him, do not stand to seek more law work. For that moment you close with Christ, by virtue of the covenant of grace, the law has gotten its end, Christ being 'the end of the law to every one that believeth.' It is the weary and heavy laden that are called; but that is not to exclude others, who cannot find that disposition in themselves; and they are mentioned in particular in the call, because they are most ready to exclude themselves from having any concern in Christ or his covenant.

Object. 4. *I am afraid to take hold of God's covenant in case I turn away from his commandments*, and so render myself unworthy of a covenant relation to him. Ans. If you really take hold of his covenant, the grace of his covenant will keep you in the way of his commandments. Jer. xxxii. 40, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.'

Object. 5. I am afraid to take hold of God's covenant,

in case that I never be able to bear the cross: I will faint in the day of adversity, for my strength is small. Ans. Do not fear that, for he that sits on the throne has said in his covenant, 'When thou passest through the waters he will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.' His presence shall go with thee to the hottest furnace, and unto the deep waters of Marah; and if so, there is no fear but thy head shall be carried above.

Object. 6. *I have formerly attempted to take hold of God's covenant; but I have played the harlot with many lovers since that.* Ans. Renew thy hold of the covenant; for the grace of God's covenant, the rainbow about the throne, is still pointing thee out as it were by name: Jer. iii. 1, 'Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.'

Object. 7. *But I have acted as a rebel against heaven, I have been waging war against God, and will ever he allow me to meddle with his covenant, or come within the verge of this rainbow?* For answer, see Psal. lxxviii. 18. where we are told concerning him that sits upon the throne of grace within the rainbow, 'He received gifts for men; yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among us.' See also, Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

Object. 8. *I want power to take hold of the covenant, I want power to believe in Christ by virtue of the covenant.* Ans. He that sits upon the throne, with the rainbow about it, is saying, 'I will give power to the faint, and increase strength to them that have no might;' yea, he has said that he will 'make thee willing by the day of his power;' and if he has given thee the will to believe, there is no fear for the want of power; for he that works the will by his covenant, has engaged to work the do also; he 'works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'

Object. 9. You are always speaking about the bow of the covenant, but *I would fain see it*; I have seen the natural bow, but the rainbow of the covenant is invisible. Ans. It is strange not to see it, when you have it in your hand. The Old and New Testament is the rainbow that I am speaking of; the rainbow is at this moment shining upon you in a preached gospel. O remember that awful word, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.'

Object. 10. I am afraid I be *one of those from whom this rainbow is hid*, and so am lost for ever. Ans. If thou dost not see it, I ask, Art thou longing to see it? If so, I can tell you for good news, thou shalt see it ere long; 'for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness;' and then he that sits on the throne has said, that he will 'open the blind eyes, and turn thee from darkness, *that thou shalt behold the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.*'

Thus I have endeavoured to clear away all the objections I can think upon, that you may be encouraged to come within the bow that is about the throne of grace. What are you resolved to do? Will you come within the bow of God's covenant or not? I would fain expostulate the matter with you. What will you do in the day of death, if you come not within this rainbow? What will you do in the day of reckoning, when standing before the bar of God? Whither will you flee, when rocks and mountains refuse to fall upon you, to hide you from the face of the Lamb? O Sirs, there is no shunning the deluge of divine wrath, but by taking hold of the covenant, and of the faithfulness of God engaged therein. The whole creation cannot help you if you do it not, but you must lie under the fiery mountains of God's wrath for ever; for 'he that believeth not is condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on him.' O then, Sirs, for the Lord's sake, and for your own souls'

sake, flee in within the rainbow that is about the throne; believe in Christ by virtue of the covenant of grace and promise. And if after all you will not comply, I declare in the name of God, that the bow of God's covenant shall stand you in no stead. The faithfulness of God, that is engaged to save the sinner that believes, or takes hold of his covenant, is engaged to damn the soul that continues in unbelief; for, as 'he that believeth, shall be saved; so he that believeth not shall be damned.

But I cannot think of parting with you upon mount Ebal or Sinai. And therefore let me beseech you, by the mercy of God, by all the blessings of his covenant, by the blood and bowels of a God of love in Christ, by all the glory of heaven and eternity, that you come within the compass of the rainbow that is about the throne. However bad thy condition is there is relief for thee in Christ; for he is *all* in *all*. Is thy state a state of sin? Well, Christ is the Saviour of none but sinners. Is thy state a state of distance from God? Well, he came to bring us near by his own blood. Is thy state a state of enmity and war against heaven? Well, his work is to reconcile God and man, to satisfy justice, and to slay the enmity of the heart; he breaks down the wall of partition, and brings both parties into one. Is thy state a hopeless state? Well, he is the hope of all the ends of the earth. Is it a state of darkness? He is the light of the world. Art thou in an impotent state? He is the strength of the poor and of the needy. Art thou in a state of bondage? He proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Art thou cursed? He came to redeem thee from the curse. Art thou dead in sin, dead by the law? Well, he died that we might live; and though thou be dead, yet thou shalt live, if thou believe in him. So that, I say, there is that in Christ which meets the condition of the sinner, let his case be never so bad, if he be on this side of hell. Now, I say, be persuaded of all this, be assured of it, that there is help laid upon this mighty Redeemer, and that he is indeed able to save to the very uttermost.

SERMON V.

THE BELIEVER EXALTED IN IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. Psal. lxxxix. 16.

THE Psalmist, in the beginning of this psalm, having run out at a great length in the praise and commendation of the God of Israel, comes, from the 15th verse of the psalm, to declare the happiness of his Israel, or of true believers, of whom Israel according to the flesh were a type.

Now, God's Israel are a happy people upon several accounts. 1. Because they are privileged to *know the joyful sound*. The gospel has a joyful sound; a sound of peace, a sound of life, a sound of liberty and salvation. You are all privileged to hear this sound with your bodily ears; but the great question is, if you do know it, understand it, and give faith's entertainment to it. Alas! Isaiah's lamentation may but too justly be continued, with respect to the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, 'Who hath believed our report?' 2. God's Israel are a happy people, because they '*walk in the light of his countenance.*' They are privileged with the special intimations of his love, which puts more gladness in their hearts, than when corn, wine, and oil doth abound. 3. Whatever discouragement they may meet with from the world, yet still they have ground of rejoicing in their God: '*In thy name shall they rejoice all the day;*' and 'Thanks be unto God,' says the apostle, 'who always causeth us to triumph in Christ.' 4.

Their happiness is evident from this, that they are dignified and exalted above others, by the immaculate robe of a Surety's righteousness; as you see in the words of my text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

In which words briefly we may notice, 1. The believer's promotion; he is *exalted*. In the first Adam we were debased unto the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads: but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we 'sit together with him in heavenly places,' says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer, who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious head and representative; and yet it is indisputably true, that we 'sit together with him in heavenly places,' Eph. ii. 6. Yea, in him the believer 'rules the nations with a rod of iron,' and triumphs over, and treadeth upon all the powers of hell. 2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation; it is *in thy righteousness*. It is not in any righteousness of his own; no, this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but *dung and loss, filthy rags, dog's meat*: but it is in *thy* righteousness; that is, *the righteousness of God*, as the apostle calls it, Rom. i. 17. 'The righteousness which is of God by faith,' Phil. iii. 9. *The righteousness of God* is variously taken in Scripture. Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature: Psal. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.' Sometimes for his rectoral equity, or distributive justice, which he exerciseth in the government of the world, rewarding the good and punishing evil doers. Psal. xcvi. 2, 'Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening. Psal. xxxvi. 5, 6, 'Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: thy righteousness is like the great mountains.' Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ the Son of God as our Surety and Mediator brought in, by his obedience

to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners: and this, as I said, is frequently called *the righteousness of God*; and in this sense I understand it here in the text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

The observation is much the same with the words themselves. Namely, That in, or by, the righteousness of Christ, believers are exalted. Or thus, Whatever honour or happiness believers are exalted to, the righteousness of Christ is the ground and foundation of it. It is all owing to the complete obedience, and meritorious death of the ever-blessed Surety. This is the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, upon which all our happiness in time and through eternity is built.

All I shall do shall be only,

I. To offer a few remarks respecting this righteousness, that you may understand both the nature and necessity of it.

II. Speak a little of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness.

III. Apply.

I. For the first thing, I shall offer a few remarks respecting this righteousness for clearing its nature and necessity.

1. Then, know, that God having made man a rational creature, capable of moral government, *gave him a law suited to his nature*, by which he was to govern himself in the duties he owed to God his great Creator. This law was delivered to man in the form of a covenant, with a promise of life upon the condition of perfect obedience, and a threatening of death in case of disobedience, Gen. ii. 17. Thus stood matters between God and man in a state of innocency.

2. Adam, and all his posterity in him, and with him, *having broken the covenant, are become liable to the curse and penalty of it*; so that our salvation is become absolutely impossible, until justice be satisfied, and the honour of the broken law be repaired. The law and justice of God are very peremptory, and stand upon a full satisfaction and reparation, otherwise heaven's gates shall be shut and

eternally barred against man and all his posterity. The flaming sword of justice turns every way, to keep us from access unto the paradise that is above.

3. While man in these circumstances was expecting nothing but to fall an eternal sacrifice unto divine justice, *the eternal Son of God, in his infinite love and pity to perishing sinners, steps in as a Mediator and Surety*, offering not only to take our nature, but to take our law-place, to stand in our room and stead: whereby the whole obligation of the law, both penal and preceptive, falls upon him; that is, he becomes liable and obliged both to fulfil the command, and to endure the curse of the covenant of works, which we had violated. And here, by the way, it is fit to advertise you, that it was an act of amazing grace in the Lord Jehovah, to admit a Surety in our room. For, had he stood to the rigour and severity of the law, he would have demanded a personal satisfaction, without admitting of the satisfaction of a Surety: in which case Adam, and all his posterity, had fallen under the stroke of avenging justice through eternity. But, glory to God in the highest, who not only admitted of a Surety, but provided one, and laid help upon one that is mighty.

4. Christ, the eternal Son of God, being in 'the fulness of time, made of a woman, *and made under the law,*' as our Surety, he actually, *in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole terms of the covenant of works;* that is, in a word, he obeyed all the commands of the law, and endured the curse of it, and thereby brings in a complete law-righteousness; whereby guilty sinners are justified before God. And this is the righteousness by which we are exalted. By his active and passive obedience, he *magnifies the law, and makes it honourable*, and the Lord declares himself to be *well pleased for his righteousness' sake*.

5. But although Christ obeyed the law, and satisfied justice, and thereby brought in an everlasting law-righteousness for a whole elect world; yet the elect of God *are never exalted by virtue of this righteousness, till, in a day of power, they be brought to receive it by faith*, and submit to it for jus-

tification before God. We disclaim that Antinomian error, of an actual justification from eternity, or even of a formal justification, bearing date from the death of Christ. We own, indeed, with all protestant sound divines, that it was the purpose of God to justify his elect from eternity, and that all the elect were represented by Christ in his obedience unto the death; but that they are actually justified before conversion, or before their application by faith unto the blood of Jesus, is impossible; because the sentence of the broken law stands always in force against them, till they actually believe in the Son of God; for *he that believeth not, is condemned already*. And how can they be both justified and condemned at the same time? Till then, they are *children of wrath even as others*.

6. This righteousness of the Surety *is conveyed unto us by imputation*; as is abundantly plain from many places of scripture, particularly Rom. iv. 6, 11, 12, 23, 24. God reckons what the Surety did in our room unto us; so that his righteousness becomes as much ours for justification before God, as though we had obeyed the law, and satisfied justice in our own person. Now, this imputation of the Surety's righteousness runs principally upon these two or three things. (1.) Upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the Surety of an elect world. Then it was that he gave bond to the Father, to pay their debt in the red gold of his blood, saying, 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire:—Lo, I come:—I delight to do thy will.' (2.) Upon the actual imputation of our sins unto him: 'The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.' There is a blessed exchange of places between Christ and his people: he takes on our sin and unrighteousness, that we may be clothed with the white robe of his righteousness. 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' (3.) Upon the ground of the mystical union between Christ and the believer. When the poor soul is determined in a day of power to embrace the Lord Jesus in the arms of

faith, Christ and he in that very moment do coalesce into one body. He becomes a branch of the noble vine; a member of that body whereof Christ is the glorious Head of eminence, influence, and government. And being thus united to Christ, the long and white robe of the Mediator's righteousness is spread over him; whereby he is not only freed from condemnation, but for ever sustained as righteous in the sight of God: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'

II. The second thing in the method, was to speak of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness. And here I will very briefly show, 1. What evils it exalts him above. 2. What happiness and dignity it exalts him to.

First, What evils it exalts him above.

1. It exalts him above *the law as a covenant of works*; yea, above both the commanding and the condemning power of that covenant. 'Ye are not under the law,' says the apostle, 'but under grace,' Rom. vi. 14. And if they be not under it, it follows that they are exalted above it. Indeed they are not, and cannot be above it, as a rule of duty. No creature can be dispensed from the obligation of yielding obedience to the laws of the great Creator; and the believer, in a peculiar manner, is bound to obey the law of a Creator, in the hand of a Mediator. But considering the law as a covenant of works, demanding the debt of obedience as a condition of life or threatening eternal wrath in case of disobedience, the believer is indeed exalted above it by the righteousness of Christ. And if the law at any time attempt to bring the believer in bondage to it, he is to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free. The bond-woman Hagar, with her offspring of legal fears and terrors, is cast out by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Gal. iv. 30. If a believer in Christ shall hear the thunderings and curses of mount Ebal, or Sinai, he has no reason to be affrighted; for Christ by his righteousness hath redeemed from the curse of law. 'Thou art not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned

with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest;—but thou art come unto mount Sion,—and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.' The believer is dead to the law by the body of Christ, being married unto a better husband, even him that is raised from the dead.

2. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above *the world*. Rev. xii. 1, the 'woman clothed with the sun, has the moon under her feet;' which may not only point at the believer's duty to soar heavenward in his affections, but also his privilege in Christ, to trample both upon the frowns and flatteries of this lower world; according to that of the apostle, 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

3. By this righteousness he is exalted above *the power and malice of Satan*. Indeed as long as the believer is on this side of Jordan, the devil will be harassing him with his fiery darts, and do his utmost to make him go halting to heaven. But by virtue of this righteousness, namely, the doing and dying of our ever-blessed Surety, the devil is both disarmed and destroyed. The head of the old serpent is bruised; for 'through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' And by faith in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, the believer treads Satan under his feet; they *overcome him by the blood of the Lamb*.

4. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above *death*. Perhaps thou art in bondage through fear of death; thy heart is like to faint and fail thee, when thou lookest to the swellings of this Jordan. But take a view of this righteousness, and thou shalt be exalted above the fears of it; for although thou be liable to the stroke of death, yet by this righteousness thou art freed from the sting of it. What is the sting of death? It is sin. Now, Christ has 'finished transgression, and made an end of sin, by bringing in everlasting righteousness.' And therefore thou mayest roll that word like a sweet morsel under thy

tongue, Hos. xiii. 14, 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.'

5. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above *all accusations*, from whatever quarter they may come, Rom. viii. 33. There the apostle gives a bold challenge, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' The challenge is universal in respect of all accusers: as if he had said, Is there any in heaven, earth, or hell, that can accuse them? It is universal in respect of all the accused; for the whole elect of God are comprehended, among whom there have been as great sinners as ever breathed on God's earth. And it is universal in respect of all crimes: it is not said, Who shall lay this, or that, or the other crime to their charge? but *any thing?* and what can be more comprehensive? Now, what is the ground of this bold challenge? It is grounded on the righteousness of Christ: for, says the apostle, 'It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again,' &c.

Secondly, I come to show what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted to by virtue of this righteousness. I only name these two or three particulars.

1. He is exalted by it unto a state of *peace and reconciliation with God*: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' God for ever lays aside every grudge in his heart against the soul that is clothed therewith.

2. They are exalted by this righteousness unto a state of *sonship*. Christ was 'made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,' Gal. v. 4, 5.

3. Unto a state of *fellowship and familiarity with God*, and access to him with holy confidence and boldness: Heb. x. 19, 20, 21, 22, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a

high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.' Heb. iv. 14, 16, 'Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace.' The believer may come, under the covert of this righteousness, with as great freedom unto God as his Father in Christ, as ever Adam could have done in a state of innocence.

4. At last thou shalt be exalted to a state of *endless glory*. For heaven (as I was hinting before) is the purchase of the obedience and death of Christ; and faith acted on this righteousness and satisfaction, is *the path of life*, by which we enter into these *rivers of pleasure*, and that *fulness of joy* which is *at God's right hand for evermore*.

III. The third thing was the application of the doctrine. And my first use shall be of information, in these two particulars.

1. See hence, that the believer *has no ground of boasting*. Why? Because it is not in his own, but in Christ's righteousness, that he is exalted: 'Boasting is excluded,' says the apostle. 'By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith,' Rom. iii. 27. If it were by our own doings or obedience that we were exalted, we would have something to boast of: but since it is in his righteousness that we are exalted, we have nothing whereof to glory in ourselves. There are three questions that the apostle asks, which may silence all flesh, and put all boasters to an eternal blush, 1 Cor. iv. 7, 'Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' Let believers themselves pose their souls with these, or the like inquiries, when pride begins to arise in their breasts.

2. See hence a *noble antidote against a spirit of bondage unto fear*. What is it that thou fearest, O believer? Indeed if thou sin, thou mayest fear the rod of a Father; for 'he will visit thy transgression with the rod, and thine iniquity with stripes.' But art thou afraid of vindictive wrath? There is no ground for this. He has, Luke i. 74,

‘delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear;’ that is, without all servile or slavish fear of wrath. Art thou afraid of the tempests of Mount Sinai? There is no ground for that, for the storm broke upon the head of thy Surety; and therefore thou mayest sing and say, as Isa. xii. 1, ‘Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away.’ Art thou afraid lest thou be refused access unto the presence-chamber? Improve this righteousness by faith, and thou shalt see that the way to the holy of holies is opened, and get the banner of love displayed over thee. Whenever the poor believer takes the righteousness of the Surety in the hand of faith, and holds it up unto God as a ransom of his own finding, he is so well pleased with it, that his frowns are turned into smiles. In a word, you shall never get rid of a spirit of bondage, till you learn by faith to improve this law-biding righteousness; and then indeed legal fears and terrors do evanish, like the darkness of the night before the rising of the sun.

Use second, of reproof unto all those who are seeking to exalt themselves by a righteousness of their own, like the Jews, Rom. x. 3. who ‘went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.’ There are some of the hearers of the gospel who exalt themselves in a *negative righteousness*: they are not so bad as others: they are free of gross out-breakings, being no common drunkards, swearers, or sabbath-breakers; and therefore conclude that all is right with them. But, Sirs, the Pharisee could make this boast: and Paul before conversion could say, that *touching the law* he was *blameless*; and yet when God opened his eyes, he found himself lying under the arrest of justice; for, ‘when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.’

Others are exalting themselves in a *moral kind of righteousness*; they not only cease to do evil, but do many things that are materially good: they are sober, temperate, just in their dealings, liberal to the poor, good peaceable neighbours; they love every body, and every body loves

them; they keep the commandments as well as they can: and this is the ground they are standing upon. But I may say to you, as Christ said to the young man, who told him, 'All these things have I kept from my youth up.' 'Yet lackest thou one thing.' O what is that? say you. I answer, it is to be brought off from the rotten bottom of a covenant of works that ye are standing upon. You need to see that you are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and that you are legally dead, condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on you. You need to see, that 'all your own righteousness is as filthy rags,' and to be made to say, with the church, 'Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'

Others will go farther than bare morality; *they will abound in the duties of religion*, read, hear, pray, communicate, run from sermon to sermon, from sacrament to sacrament; and upon these things they rest. All these things are good in their proper place; but if you build your hope of acceptance here, you are still upon a covenant of works bottom, seeking righteousness, *as it were by the works of the law*; and while you do so, you do but seek the living among the dead. All your works are but dead works, till you be in Christ; and they will but stand for cyphers in God's reckoning, till you be brought to submit to this righteousness, by which alone guilty sinners can be exalted.

Others rely upon *a mixed kind of righteousness*. They will freely own, that their duties and performances will never exalt them into favour and acceptance with God; but, O, say they, it is Christ and our duties, Christ and our prayers, he and our tears and repentance, that must do it. But believe it, Sirs, Christ and the idol of self will never cement; these old rotten rags will never piece in with the white and new robe of the righteousness of the Son of God: and if you adventure to mingle them together, 'Christ shall profit you nothing,' Gal. v. 2, 3, 4.

Others again, will pretend to renounce all their works and duties, and own, with their mouths, that it is *by faith in Christ only that they hope* to be accepted. But though

they own this with their mouths, yet still their hearts cleave fast unto a covenant of works; they were never *through the law, dead to the law*. And when nothing else will do, they will make their own act of believing the righteousness on which they lean for acceptance; which is still a seeking righteousness in themselves: whereas, if ever we be justified before God, we must have it in the Lord Jesus, saying, *In him will we be justified, and in him alone will we glory*. Faith carries the soul quite out of itself; yea, faith renounces its own act in the point of justification.

All these, and many other dreams and lying refuges hath the devil and our own hearts devised, to lead us off from Christ. But, O Sirs, believe it, these are but imaginary sanctuaries, and the hail will sweep them away. Nothing but the doing and dying of the Surety, apprehended by faith, will ever exalt you into favour and fellowship with God, or acquit you from the curse and condemnation of the broken law. And unless you betake yourselves to the horns of this blessed altar, to this refuge of God's appointing, you are undone; and you may read your doom, Isa. l. 11, 'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.'

Use third, of trial. Is it so, that in Christ's righteousness we are exalted? O then, Sirs, try if you be really exalted by this righteousness.

1. Hast thou seen thyself *condemned by the law or covenant of works*? Every man by nature is condemned already, while out of Christ. Now the ordinary way that God takes of bringing an elect soul into Christ, and under the covering of his righteousness, is by discovering unto him the sentence of condemnation that he is under by virtue of the broken law; and thus paves the way towards his acceptance of Christ as *the Lord our righteousness*; for thus it is that 'the law is our schoolmaster, to lead us unto Christ, that

we may be justified by faith.' The Lord leads the sinner to mount Zion by the foot of Sinai: the Spirit's way is, first to *convince of sin* and then of *righteousness*.

2. Has the Lord *discovered the Surety and his righteousness to thee?* And has thy soul found rest here? Perhaps the law, and its curses, justice and wrath, were pursuing thee; and thou couldst not find a hole wherein to hide thy head, *all refuge failed*. At length the Lord drew aside the vail, and discovered his righteousness as a sufficient shelter, saying, 'Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.' And thither thou fleddest, as unto a city of refuge, saying, 'This is my rest, here will I dwell.' Readily when it comes to this, there is a little heaven of serenity and joy enters into the soul; so that if it were possible, it would make heaven and earth to ring with Hallelujahs of praise unto God for his unspeakable gift. Dost thou not know, O believer, something of this, to thy sweet experience? This says, that in his righteousness thou art exalted.

3. When an arrow of conviction is at any time shot by the hand of God into thy conscience, whereby thy peace and quiet is disturbed, *whither dost thou run for ease and relief?* The man that is married to the law runs unto the law for relief and ease; the law is the thing that heals him: his prayers, his tears, his reformation, is that which stops the mouth of his conscience. But as for the believer, he can never find rest on this side of the blood of sprinkling, he gets his healing only from under the wings of the Sun of righteousness. No other balm will give him ease, but *the balm of Gilead*; and no other hand can apply it, but *the Physician there*.

4. If you be exalted by imputed righteousness, *you will be the real students of gospel holiness*. It is a gross perverting of the gospel, and a turning of the grace of our God into wantonness, for folk to pretend that they are justified by the merit of Christ, while they are not at the same time concerned to be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. Sanctification, or freedom from the power and dominion of sin, is a part, and no small part, of that salvation which

Christ has purchased by his obedience and death: Tit. ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Justification and sanctification go always hand in hand. He who is *made of God unto us righteousness*, is also *made sanctification*; we are *justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*. Try yourselves then by this whether you be exalted by this righteousness. Are you delivered from the reigning power of sin? at least, is it so far broken, that it is become your burden, under which you groan, saying, with the apostle, 'Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

Use fourth shall be of consolation and encouragement to believers who are exalted in this righteousness. By virtue of it, O believer, thou art entitled unto every thing that possibly thou canst stand in need of. Whatever grace or mercy thou wantest, thou shalt have it, if thou do but improve this law-biding righteousness. Wantest thou pardoning grace to take away the guilt of sin? That is one of the gifts of God, through the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith; for 'he is set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.' Wantest thou to have thy peace with God confirmed? Improve this righteousness by faith, for 'being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Wantest thou access unto the holiest? By faith in the blood of Jesus have we *access with boldness*. Wantest thou medicinal grace for healing of soul plagues? Improve this righteousness by faith; for *by his stripes we are healed*. Out of the side of our gospel-altar comes forth living water, that healeth the corrupt and dead sea of indwelling corruption, Ezek. xlvi. 9. This is 'the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.' Wantest thou a shadow or covering, to shelter thy weary soul from the scorching heat of divine anger, or of temptation from Satan or tribulation from the world? Improve this righteousness and sit down under

the shadow of it: it is 'as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' Wantest thou courage to look the law or justice of God in the face? Here is a fund for it? for under this covering thou mayest look out with confidence, and say, *who can lay any thing to my charge?* Wantest thou to have the new covenant confirmed to thy soul? Improve this righteousness by faith; for Christ, by his obedience and death, *confirmed the covenant with many.* His blood is *the blood of the New Testament;* and when the soul by faith takes hold of it, the covenant of grace is that moment confirmed unto it for ever. In a word, by virtue of this righteousness thou mayest come to a communion table, and to a throne of grace, and ask what thou wilt; our heavenly Father can refuse nothing to the younger brethren, who come to him in their elder Brother's garment. By virtue of this righteousness, thou mayest lay claim to every thing, to all the blessings of heaven and eternity. Thou didst indeed forfeit thy right in the first Adam; but the forfeiture is recovered, and the right restored to thee upon a better ground, namely, upon the obedience and death of the second Adam; and thou comest in upon his right. May not all this then revive thy drooping spirit, and make thee take up that song in the text, *In thy name will I rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness will I be exalted.*

SERMON VI.

THE WIND OF THE HOLY GHOST BLOWING UPON THE DRY BONES.

Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.—Ezek. xxxvii. 9.

IN the beginning of this chapter, the Lord, in a vision, brings the prophet Ezekiel into a valley full of dead men's bones, quite dried and withered, and asks him the question, If he thought it possible for these dry bones to live? thereby intimating, that although it was a thing impossible with men, yet it was easily effected by the almighty power of God. And, to convince him of it, he commands the prophet to speak unto the dry bones, and to tell them, in his name, that he would make the breath of life to enter into them: which accordingly is done; for the prophet having, in the name of the Lord, called upon the four winds to breathe upon the dry bones, immediately life enters into them, and they come together, bone to his bone, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, and became an exceeding great army.

We have in this vision a representation of the resurrection of the church of God from the grave of her bondage and captivity in Babylon, under which she was at present detained. And this indeed is the primary and immediate scope of the vision, as is plain from the explication that follows it, ver. 11, 12, 13, 14. However, seeing the deliverance of the children of Israel out of their Babylonish captivity, was typical of our spiritual redemption purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in a day of

power applied by the mighty and powerful operation of the Holy Spirit of God; and seeing it is this redemption that we under the gospel are principally concerned with, therefore I shall handle the words that I have read under this spiritual sense and meaning.

And in them briefly we have, 1. A dismal case supposed, and that is spiritual deadness. The people of God were not only in bondage under their enemies, but likewise their souls were at this time in a languishing condition.

2. We have a blessed remedy here expressed, and that is the breathings of the Spirit of the Lord, the influences of the Holy Ghost: *Come from the four winds, O breath, &c.*

Now, from these words I only offer you this one observation, namely,

Doctr. 'That as the generality of a church and people in covenant with God may be in a very dead and languishing condition as to their souls, so the breathings and influences of the Holy Spirit of God are absolutely necessary for their revival.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I would,

I. Clear the nature of these influences in a word or two.

II. Speak of the variety of these influences, *four winds*.

III. Attend to the manner of their operation upon the elect; they are said to *breathe upon the slain*.

IV. Speak a little of the necessity of these breathings.

V. I shall apply.

I. The first thing is, to clear the nature of these breathings or influences. And what I have to offer upon this head, you may take in these few propositions.

1. Know that the influences and gifts of the Spirit of God are of *two sorts*, either common or saving. As for the common influences of the Spirit, which are sometimes bestowed upon the wicked and reprobate world, I am not to speak of these at this time. All I shall say about them is, first, that they are given in common to the children of men, 'for edifying of the *mystical* body of Christ,' until it arrive at 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' as you read, Eph. iv.; and therefore they are com-

monly called by divines *dona ministrantia*, or *ministering gifts*. Although they have no saving efficacy upon the person in whom they dwell; yet God, in his holy wisdom, makes use of them for the good of his church in general, as we read, Eph. iv. And another thing that I would tell you likewise concerning these common influences, is, that they are of an exceeding dangerous nature when they are not accompanied with saving grace. The man that has them is like a ship having big large sails, and but little or no ballast at all, in the midst of the ocean, and therefore in danger of being split in pieces against every rock. In Matth. vii. 22. we read of some who had extraordinary uncommon gifts; they prophesied in Christ's name, wrought miracles, and cast out devils in his name, and did many wonderful works, and yet Christ utterly disowns them. I do not speak of these common influences now, but of such as are saving. And therefore,

2. A second proposition is, that *the Holy Spirit* of God, considered in his particular economy in the work of redemption, as the applier of the Redeemer's purchase, *is the author and efficient cause of all saving influences*. It is he, I say, that prepares and disposes the soul of man for the entertainment of the things of God, which are not received nor discerned by the natural mind. It is he that ploughs up the fallow ground of the heart, and brings in the wilderness, and turns it into a fruitful field. It is he that garnishes the face of the soul with the saving graces of the Spirit; these are flowers of the upper paradise, therefore called 'the fruits of the Spirit,' Gal. v. 22. It is he that preserves, cherishes, and maintains them by renewed influences: he cherishes the smoking flax, and at last turns it into a lamp of glory in heaven; 'for he brings forth judgment into victory.'

3. Again, know that *the elect of God are the subjects* recipient of all saving influences of the Spirit of God; I say, they are peculiar unto the elect of God, and to them only, upon their conversion, when they come to be united unto Christ, as members of his mystical body. We must be ingrafted

into this true olive, otherwise we can never partake of his sap, and 'receive out of his fulness grace for grace.' That these influences are peculiar unto the elect of God, is plain from Tit. i. 1. where we read of 'the faith of God's elect.'

4. These influences of the Spirit *are given for various ends* unto the elect of God. The judicious Dr. Owen, in his 'Discourses on the Spirit,' observes, that these saving influences are given unto the elect of God for regeneration, unto the regenerate for sanctification, unto the sanctified for consolation, and unto the comforted Christian for further upbuilding, and edification, and establishment, until they arrive at perfection in glory. But the nature of these influences will further appear from,

II. The second thing proposed, which was, to speak a little of the variety of these influences of the Spirit. You see they are diversified here, while they are called *four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath.* The apostle tells us, that 'there are diversities of gifts and operations, but the same Spirit,' 1 Cor. xi. 4. And we read of 'seven Spirits that are before the throne,' Rev. i. Here I might tell you that the saving influences and breathings of the Spirit, are either primary, fundamental, and absolutely necessary to salvation, or they are accumulative, additional, necessary only for the believer's comfort and well-being; that some of these influences are antecedent, or preparative unto conversion; some of them regenerating, and others are subsequent and posterior unto regeneration. But I shall not stand upon such nice distinctions. You may take a few of them in the order following.

1. There are *the convincing influences* of the Spirit: John xvi. 8, 'When he is come, he will convince the world of sin.' This is what I conceive we are to understand by the north wind, Cant. iv. 16. which is commonly boisterous, cold, chill, and nipping. The elect of God by nature lie fast asleep within the sea-mark of God's wrath, upon the very brink of everlasting ruin, crying, Peace, peace, to themselves. The Spirit of the Lord comes like a stormy north wind, blows hard upon the sinner's face, and awakens

him, breaks his carnal peace and security, brings him to himself, and lets him see his danger, fills him with remorse and terror. Hence Isa. xxviii. 17. the hail is said to 'sweep away the refuge of lies,' before the sinner come to settle upon the foundation that God hath laid in Zion. In Acts ii. 37. it is said, 'they were pricked in their heart;' and then they cried out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'

2. There are *the enlightening influences and breathings* of the Spirit. Hence he is compared unto *eye-salve*, Rev. iii. 18. 'Ye have received an unction from the Holy One, whereby ye know all things,' 1 John ii. 20. We read Isa. xxv. 7. of a veil and face of a covering that is spread over all nations. The wind of the Holy Ghost must blow off this veil of ignorance and unbelief; and then the poor sinner comes to see a new world of wonders that he never saw before,—a wonderful great God, a wonderful Redeemer, a wonderful covenant, and a wonderful holy law. Hence we are said to be 'translated out of darkness into a marvellous light. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God.' And 1 Cor. ii. 12, 'By the Spirit we know the things that are freely given to us of God.'

3. There are *the renewing influences* of the Spirit. We are said to be 'saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' Tit. iii. 5. Hence he is called 'a new Spirit;' he renews the soul after the image of God; makes the heart, that was a cage of unclean birds, a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; he garnishes the soul, and makes it like the King's daughter, *all glorious within*. They that had lien among the pots, become, 'like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' In short, he 'makes old things to pass away, and all things to become new.'

4. There are the *comforting influences* of the Spirit. This is the *south wind*, as it were, gentle and easy, and refreshing; and therefore he is called *the Comforter*. And indeed his consolations are strong consolations; they put more gladness into the heart than corn, wine, and oil in abundance; fill the soul with a joy that is 'unspeakable,

and full of glory.' His consolations are so strong, that they furnish the soul with ground of joy in the blackest and cloudiest day: Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' And the joy that he gives, is deep: 'Your heart shall rejoice.' And it is abiding: 'Your joy shall no man take from you.' And it is such as cannot be made language of: 'We rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' And then,

5. There are the *corroborating and strengthening influences* of the Spirit. By the breathings of the Spirit the feeble are made 'like David, and as the angel of God before him.' It is he that 'gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might.' It is by him that *worm Jacob* is made to 'thresh the mountains, and to beat them small, and to make the hills as chaff.' And then,

6. There are the *drawing and enlarging influences* of the Spirit: 'Draw me, says the spouse, we will run after thee.' The poor believer lies many times, as it were, wind-bound, that he is not able to move one step in the way of the Lord; but, O! when the Spirit of the Lord comes, then comes liberty and enlargement: 'I will run the way of thy commandments,' says David, 'when thou hast enlarged my heart,' to wit, by the influences of thy Spirit. He is like oil to their chariot-wheels; and when he comes, they are as the *chariots of Amminadib*, or a *willing people*.

7. There are the *sin-mortifying and sin-killing influences* of the Spirit: 'We through the Spirit,' are said to 'mortify the deeds of the body, that so we may live.' When this wind of the Holy Ghost blows upon the soul, he not only makes the spices to revive, but he kills the weeds of sin and corruption, making them to wither and decay; so that the poor believer, who was crying, 'Wretched man, what shall I do to be delivered from this body of death?' is made

sometimes to tread upon the neck of these enemies, as a pledge of his complete victory at last. And then,

8. There are the *interceding influences* of the Spirit: Rom. viii. 26, 'The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' He intercedes in a physical and efficient way. He makes us to wrestle and pray; therefore he is called 'the Spirit of grace and supplications,' Zech. xii. 10. He fills the believer's heart and mouth with such a heavenly rhetoric, that God is not able to withstand it. Hence Jacob 'had power with the angel, and prevailed;' for 'he wept, and made supplication unto him.' And then,

9. There are the *sealing and witnessing influences* of the Spirit: He 'witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the sons of God.' He bears witness of the glorious fulness and suitableness of Christ to the soul: 'the Spirit shall testify of me,' John xv. 26. And he is said to 'seal believers to the day of redemption;' and his seal is the earnest of glory: Eph. i. 13, 14, 'Ye are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance.' So much for the second thing.

III. The third thing that I proposed here, was to speak a little to the manner of the acting or operation of these influences, or how it is that this wind blows upon the soul? I answer,

1. The wind of the Holy Ghost blows very *freely*. The wind acts as an independent sovereign, John iii. 8. It doth not stay for the command, nor stop for the prohibition of any creature. So the breathings of the Spirit are sovereignly free as to the time of their donation, free as to their duration and continuance, free as to the measure, and free as to the manner of their working. And then,

2. He breathes on the soul sometimes very *surprisingly*: 'Or ever I was aware,' says the spouse, 'my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.' Canst thou not seal this in thy experience, believer, that sometimes, when thou hast gone to duty in a very heartless and lifeless condition, perhaps beginning to raze foundations, and to say with Zion,

‘The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten,’ a gale from heaven has in a manner surprised thee, and set thee upon the high places of Jacob, and made thee to cry with the spouse, ‘It is the voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills?’ His anger endureth but for a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!

3. These breathings and influences of the Spirit are sometimes *very piercing and penetrating*. The cold nipping north wind, ye know, goes to the very quick. The sword of the Spirit ‘pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ Wind, you know, is of a very seeking, penetrating nature; it seeks through the closest chambers. So the Spirit, which is the candle of the Lord, ‘searcheth the lower parts of the belly:’ he makes a discovery of these lusts and idols that skulk in the secret chambers of the heart.

4. The breathings of this wind are *very powerful, strong, and efficacious*. Who can oppose the blowings of the wind? Some winds have such a mighty force with them, that they bear down, overturn, and overthrow every thing that stands in their way. So the Spirit of the Lord sometimes, especially at first conversion, breaks in upon the soul like the *rushing of a mighty wind*, as he did upon the apostles, breaking down the strong holds of iniquity, casting to the ground every high thought and towering imagination of the soul, that exalteth itself against Christ, with a powerful and triumphant efficacy. He masters the darkness of the mind, the contumacy and rebellion of the will, and the carnality of the affections; the enmity of the heart against God, and all the spiritual wickednesses that are in the high places of the soul, are made to fall down at his feet, as Dagon did before the ark of the Lord.

5. Although he act thus powerfully and irresistibly, yet it is with *an overcoming sweetness*, so as there is not the least violence offered unto any of the natural faculties of

the soul. For whenever the Spirit comes with his saving influences, he sweetly overcomes the darkness of the mind; the sinner becomes a volunteer, and content to enlist himself a soldier under Christ's banner: Psal. cx. 3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' No sooner does Christ by his Spirit say to the soul, 'Follow me, but immediately it arises and follows him. Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.' Then,

6. There is something in the breathing of this wind that *is incomprehensible by reason*: John iii. 8, "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth," says Christ: 'so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' There is something in the operation of the eternal Spirit and his influences beyond the reach, not only of natural but of sanctified reason. Who can tell 'how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child?' so, far less can we tell how the Spirit forms the babe of grace in the heart; how he preserves, maintains, and cherishes the smoking flax, that is not quite extinguished. We may in this case apply the words of the Psalmist in another case, and say, 'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known;' and that of the apostle, 'How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.'

7. These influences of the Spirit are *sometimes felt before they be seen*. As you know a man will feel the wind, and hear it, when he cannot see it: so it is with the Lord's people many times, on whom the Spirit breathes. They feel his actings, they are sensible that he has been dealing with them; and all that they can say about it is, with the man that was born blind, 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, to speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. And here I shall show, 1. That they are necessary. 2. To what things they are necessary.

1. That they are necessary, will appear,

1st. From the *express declaration of Christ*, John xv. 5, 'Without me ye can do nothing;' that is, without the aid and influences of my Spirit. He doth not say, Without me ye cannot do many things, or great things; but, 'Without me ye can do nothing.'

2dly. It is evident from the *express acknowledgment* of the saints of God upon this head: 2 Cor. iii. 5, 'We are not,' says the apostle, 'sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.' It is he that must work all our works in us and for us.

3dly. It is plain from the *earnest prayers* of the saints for the breathings of this wind: Cant. iv. 16, 'Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, and blow upon my garden.' Psal. lxxxv. 6, 'Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?'

4thly. They are *promised* in the covenant, and therefore necessary: Isa. xlv. 3, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,' &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' Now, there is not a mercy promised in the covenant that can be wanted. But,

2. To what are these breathings necessary? I answer, they are necessary,

1st. To the quickening of the elect of God, when they are *dead in trespasses and sins*. Can ever the dry bones live, unless this omnipotent wind blow upon them? It is strange to hear some men that profess Christianity talking of the power of their own wills to quicken and convert themselves. They may as well say that a dead man may take his grave in his two arms, and lay death by him, and walk. 'No man,' says Christ, 'can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.' O what a dead weight is the sinner, that a whole Trinity must draw! for both Father and Son draw the sinner by the breathings of the Holy Ghost.

2dly. These influences are necessary for the *suitable discharge of every duty of religion*. You cannot read, you can-

not hear, you cannot pray or praise, you cannot communicate to any advantage, unless the wind of the Holy Ghost blow upon you. It is the Lord that must enlarge our steps under us, and make our feet like hinds' feet in the ways of the Lord.

3dly. They are necessary for *accomplishing our spiritual warfare* against sin, Satan, and the world. We will never be able to combat with our spiritual enemies, if he do not help us: it is he only that must 'teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so as bows of steel may be broken in pieces by us.' Without the Spirit we will fall before every temptation; like Peter, curse and swear, that we never knew him.

4thly. They are necessary to *the exercise of grace already implanted in the soul*. As we cannot work grace in our hearts, so neither can we exercise it without the renewed influences of the Holy Ghost, Cant. iv. 16. When this wind blows, then, and never till then, do the spices flow out. But I shall not stand on this: the Spirit's influences are necessary to all the uses mentioned upon the second head: for conviction, illumination, renovation, consolation, enlargement, mortification of sin, for assurance of our adoption.

V. The fifth thing is the use of the doctrine. And waving other uses that might be made of this doctrine, I shall only improve it by way of examination and of exhortation.

The first use shall be of trial and examination. Oh try, Sirs, whether or not these saving influences of the Spirit did ever breathe upon your souls, yea, or not. For your trial I shall only suggest these few things.

1. If these breathings have blown upon thy soul, man, woman, then *he has blown away the veil and face of the covering* that was naturally upon thy mind and understanding. He has given you other views of spiritual and divine things than you can have by any natural or acquired knowledge. The Spirit of the Lord is called 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,' Eph. i. 17. because he reveals those things to the soul which flesh and blood is not able to receive or un-

derstand. So then, has the Spirit testified of Christ unto you? has he 'who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,' shined into your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ? And as a fruit and consequence of this,

2. If the wind of the Holy Ghost has blown upon thy soul, he has *blown away some of the filth of hell that did cleave to thy soul*, and has transformed thee into his own image: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, thou art changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' If you have the Spirit, the 'same mind will be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; for he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit.' You will imitate and resemble him in his imitable perfections, in his holiness, meekness, self-denial, patience. He is a holy God, and wherever he comes he works holiness, and makes the soul holy.

3. If this wind has blown upon your souls, then *it has driven you from your lying refuges*, and made you take sanctuary in Christ. He has driven you from the law, and made you consent to the method of salvation through the righteousness of the Son of God: 'I through the law,' says the apostle, 'am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.' This is the design of all the Spirit's influences, to lead sinners off from sin, off from self, off from the law, that they may rest in Christ only.

4. If ever you felt any of the reviving gales of this wind of the Spirit, *you will long for new gales and breathings of it*; and when these breathings are suspended or withheld, your souls will be like to faint, as it were, like a man that wants breath. You will pant for the air of the Spirit's influences, like David, Psal. lxxiii. 1, 'My soul longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;' and Psal. lxxxiv. 2, 'My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' Oh for another gale of his Spirit in public ordinances!

5. If you have felt the breathings of this wind, you *will*

not snuff up the east wind of sin and vanity: John iv. 14, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.' You will not thirst immoderately after things of time; no, no, you will see them to be but mere trash and vanity. You will 'choose that good part which shall not be taken away from you.' You will 'seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.'

6. If this wind has blown upon thy soul, then *you will follow the motion of this wind*; you will not run cross to this wind, but will go along with it. I mean, you will yield yourselves unto the conduct of the Spirit speaking in his word; for 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

The second use shall be of exhortation. Is it so, that the influences of the Spirit are so necessary in order to our revival? then be exhorted to look up to heaven, and cry for the breathings of the Spirit. O Sirs, will ye turn the words of my text into a prayer, and say, *Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.* I might enforce this exhortation by many motives; I only name these two.

Mot. 1. Consider, Sirs, that *spiritual deadness is very prevalent in the day wherein we live.* There is a great multitude of dry bones scattered up and down our valley of vision. There are many that carry the marks of a deadly leprosy on their foreheads; their atheism, their profanity, irreligion, and other gross abominations, plainly declare to the world that they are stark dead in trespasses and sins. And, alas! may it not be for matter of lamentation, that even many of those who, in the judgment of charity, have the root of the matter, the principles of spiritual life, are yet under sad decays of the life of grace? Alas! it is not with Scotland's ministers and professors as once in a day it has been.

Mot. 2. Consider *the evil and danger of spiritual deadness.* The evil of it will appear,

1st. If ye consider that it is a frame of spirit *directly*

cross to the command of God. God commands us to 'present ourselves a living sacrifice unto him;' and indeed 'this is our reasonable service,' Rom. xii. 1. Yea, it is cross unto the very nature of God; for 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in truth,' John iv. 24.

2dly. The evil and danger of it appears further from this, that it *unfits the soul for every duty*, and mars our communion and fellowship with God. God meets the lively Christian in the way of duty: 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.' But for the man that comes to him with a Laodicean, dead, lifeless, and lukewarm frame of soul, he will not hold communion with that man; no, he will spew him out of his mouth.

3dly. It *opens the door for all other sin*, and renders a man an easy prey to every temptation. A dead man can make no power of resistance, he is carried down the stream without opposition. Then,

4thly. It *lays a foundation for sad and terrible challenges for conscience.* David's spiritual deadness brought him to that pass at the long run, that he is made to cry out of broken bones, &c.

Quest. What advice or counsel do you give, in order to our obtaining or recovering the enlightening and reviving gales of the Spirit?

Ans. 1. *Be sensible of your deadness, and mourn over it;* for the Lord 'comforts them that mourn in Zion.' He will 'give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:' and then follows, 'They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified,' Isa. lxi. 2, 3.

2. *Be much upon the mount of divine meditation;* for here it is that the Spirit of the Lord breathes: 'While I was musing the fire burned,' says David, Psal. xxxix. 3. 'When I meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,' Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6.

3. *Cry mightily unto God for these influences*, that he would pour down his Spirit from on high; for 'if ye, being evil,' says Christ, 'know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' Luke xi. 13. Plead the promises of the new covenant; and particularly be much in pleading this absolute promise of the Spirit, Isa. xlv. 3, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,' &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' But still remember, Sirs, that these promises are to be managed by the prayer of faith. We are to turn God's promise into prayers; for it is added, ver. 37, 'For these things I will be inquired of at the house of Israel, to do it for them.'

4. *Make conscience of waiting on him in all the duties and ordinances of his appointment*, particularly the preaching of the word. And beware of a legal frame of spirit in your attending upon these ordinances, as if thereby you could merit any thing at God's hand, or as if God were obliged to you for what you do this way; for 'we receive the Spirit,' says the apostle, 'not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith.' Gospel ordinances are the chariots in which the Spirit rides when he makes his entrance at first, or when he returns into the soul after absence.

5. *Lastly. Study to have union with Christ*; for it is upon them that are in Christ that the Spirit of God and of glory rests: 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit' with him. The oil of gladness that was poured upon the head of our exalted Aaron, runs down upon the skirts of his garments, upon every member of his mystical body.

SERMON VII.

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.—Heb. x. 19—22.

THESE verses contain the apostle's transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of the epistle. Having at great length discoursed upon the priestly office of Christ, in the foregoing part of the epistle, he sums up, in a few words, the scope and substance of all he had been saying, ver. 19—21. and then deduces a very natural inference from the whole, ver. 22, *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* Like a wise builder, he first digs till he comes to the foundation, and then calls himself and others to build upon it with confidence.

That we may have the more distinct view of the words, it is expedient that we observe in general, how the apostle here very elegantly expresses New Testament privileges, in an Old Testament style and dialect. The highest privilege of fallen man is to have access into the presence of God, his offended Lord and Sovereign: the only way of access is Christ, of whom the temple of Solomon was an illustrious type. And with allusion unto that typical temple Christ is presented to our faith under a threefold view, ver. 19—21.

1. As a *gate* or *door*, by which we may enter into the *holiest*, and that with *boldness*, by virtue of his own atoning

blood, ver. 19. Under the Mosaic dispensation, *Aaron alone*, and not the Israelites, could enter into the *holy of holies*, and that but *once a year*, with the blood of beasts sacrificed for himself and them. But now, under the New Testament, through the death and satisfaction of the Son of God, the way of access to friendship and fellowship with a holy God, both here and hereafter, is made open and patent to every sinner, who by faith comes in under the covert of the blood of Jesus.

2. To encourage us in our approaches to God through Christ, he is presented to us under the notion of a *new and living way, consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*, ver. 20. The inner veil, that separated between the holy place, and the holiest of all, in the temple of Jerusalem, was a type of that body of flesh assumed by the Son of God, whereby his Deity was veiled; and through the breaking or rending of this by his death on the cross, the way to God and glory becomes open and patent. And this is called a *new way*, either in opposition to Adam's way by a covenant of works, which is shut up ever since the fall of man; or because it never waxes old, but is ever fresh, green, and fragrant, unto the believing soul. And it is called a *living way*, because, though Christ was once dead, yet now he is alive, and lives for evermore, to give life to every soul that comes to God through him. And then, he is a way *consecrated for us*, he is dedicated for the use of sinners in their dealings with God: 'For their sakes,' says he, 'do I sanctify myself.' And O what can be more encouraging to a lost sinner, to make use of Christ by faith, than to know that he is just devoted for this work of saving that which was lost!

3. Whereas the sinner might object, That though the door be opened, and the new and living way consecrated; yet he is either so ignorant, that he knows not this way; or so impotent, that he cannot walk in it; or so guilty, that he dares not venture to go into the holiest: therefore, to obviate all these, Christ is presented to us as a *great high priest over the house of God*, ver. 21. O what noble

encouragement is here for believing! Christ, as a High Priest, *is ordained for men in things pertaining to God*, Heb. v. 1. And seeing he is ordained for men, may not men make use of his mediation with confidence and boldness? Heb. iv. 14—16. And then, by his office, he is obliged to execute the duties of his office toward every soul that employs him therein: he is obliged, as a High Priest, to instruct the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to confirm the feeble, and *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people*. And therefore let us take courage to employ and improve him, especially considering that he is both *a merciful and faithful High Priest*, Heb. ii. 17.; and also *a High Priest who is over the house of God*; *i. e.*, he has full power and authority from his eternal Father, to negotiate our affairs, and to render both our persons and performances acceptable unto him.

Now, I say, the apostle having thus presented Christ under the most encouraging views, as the object of our faith, trust, and confidence in our dealings with the majesty of God, he proceeds to recommend and inculcate a correspondent duty in the words of my text, ver. 22, *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled, &c.*

In these words we may notice, 1. The grand duty the apostle urges, *Let us draw near*. 2. He gives particular directions how we are to manage in our approaches unto God, through the new and living way, *viz.*, *With a true heart, in full assurance of faith, &c.*

As for the first, *viz.*, the general duty that is pressed, *Let us draw near*. The apostle does not tell us expressly, whither, or to whom, we are to draw near; but it is plain from the whole drift of the text and context, that he invites us to draw near *to God*; not to God absolutely considered, for thus he is inaccessible by guilty sinners; but to *'God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.'* This is that *throne of grace* to which he had invited us to *'come with boldness, that we may obtain mercy, and find*

grace to help in time of need,' chap. iv. 16. The Greek word is the very same both there and here.

The exhortation, *Draw near*, supposes our natural distance and estrangement from God: 'All we like sheep have gone astray,' says the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 6. When Christ would describe our apostate and lapsed state, he doth it under the notion of a 'prodigal going into a far country,' Luke xv. There are three things we all lost and forfeited in the first Adam, viz., the *image of God*, the *favour of God*, and *fellowship with God*: yea, so much have we lost them, that the apostle plainly tells us, that we are *alienated from the very life of God* in our natural state. Thus the breach and rupture is wide like the sea. Can ever parties betwixt whom there is such a natural and moral distance be brought together again? Yes; the apostle's exhortation to *draw near* plainly bears, that the offended and affronted Majesty of heaven is accessible 'by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way.' It was the great plot of Heaven from eternity, to bring fallen man back again into fellowship with his Maker. Infinite wisdom, animated by infinite bowels of mercy, has found the way, and the way is CHRIST, John xiv. 6. The main intent of his incarnation, and of the whole of his mediatory work, was to *bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. To bring strangers and enemies to amity and unity, is a great and mighty work; yet this work he accomplishes and brings about by the ransom he has paid for us, and by the operation of his Spirit in us.

The apostle next proceeds to direct as to the manner of our approach. And,

First, he directs us to draw near *with a true heart*. This is a word fitly spoken. If he had required us to draw near with a heart perfectly clean and pure, he might as well have bidden us fly without wings; but he bids us draw near with a *true heart*, *i. e.*, with a heart truly concerned about acceptance with God, a heart truly approving of, and acquiescing in the new and living way. In short,

a true heart here, is opposed to a double, doubting, distrustful, and hypocritical heart.

The second direction or advice the apostle gives, in order to our successful approach unto God by the new and living way, and which I have principally in view, is, to draw near IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH. The original word signifies to be *fully persuaded*, or *assured* of a thing; and is opposed to *wavering*, *doubting*, and *uncertainty*. The apostle having laid a firm foundation of access in the preceding verses, bids us trust to it, and rest upon it, with an unshaken confidence, and certain persuasion of success. What further is necessary by way of explication, will occur in the prosecution of the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'It is the will of God, that they who approach to him in Christ, should draw near in full assurance of faith, or with a certain persuasion, and confident expectation of success and acceptance.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, endeavour to speak,

I. Of faith in general.

II. Of the assurance of faith.

III. Of the full assurance of faith.

IV. Of the grounds that faith builds its assurance upon, in drawing near to God.

V. Apply the whole.

I. The first thing proposed in the method was, to discourse a little of faith in general. I shall not stand upon the different kinds of faith that are commonly mentioned, such as, a *historical*, *miraculous*, and *temporary* faith, which may be found in reprobates and temporary believers: our inquiry at present is particularly regarding *the faith of God's elect*, which is well described in our Shorter Catechism thus:

'Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone, for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.'

For clearing of which description, I offer the few following considerations.

1. That faith is *a saving grace*. And it is so designated, because it is the free gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. It is not the product of free-will; such a flower never sprung out of the soil of depraved nature. No, it is one of the prime operations of the Spirit, in effectual calling, upon the souls of God's elect. It is not bestowed upon any on the account of good dispositions or qualifications antecedent to itself. Faith is the first grace, or the first act of spiritual life, and, as it were, the parent of the other graces, because it roots and grafts the soul in Christ, from whom alone our fruit is found. Before the implantation of faith, nothing but atheism, enmity, ignorance, and unbelief, overspread the face of the soul, 'it being alienated from the *very* life of God, through the ignorance that is in us.' And therefore, faith must needs be a *grace or free gift of God*, bestowed without any antecedent merit, good disposition, or qualification in us. Faith is a *saving grace*; because, wherever true faith is, there salvation is already begun, and shall certainly be consummated in due time. There is an inseparable connexion stated, by the ordination of Heaven, between faith and salvation; John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.' Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, shall be saved.' When we preach the everlasting gospel, making offer of Christ and his salvation unto every creature, we are at the same time to declare, that whosoever he be that gives faith's entertainment unto this gospel of the grace of God, shall be saved. So that this promise, establishing the connexion between faith and salvation, is as extensive as the offer of the gospel, and is not made to believers exclusively of others. It is certainly true of every son of Adam, lying within the joyful sound of a Saviour, that if he believe, he shall be saved.

2. I remark from this description of faith, that it hath Christ for its main and principal object; for it is a faith *in Jesus Christ*. There is such a relationship betwixt Christ and faith, that they cannot be separated. Take away

Christ from faith, then faith is but a cypher, and stands for nothing; nothing can fill the eye or hand of faith, but Christ only. Christ is the *bread of life*; faith is the *mouth* of the soul that eats and feeds upon him. Christ is the mystical *brazen serpent*; faith the *eye* of the soul that looks to him for healing. Christ is the *strong hold* cast open to the prisoners of hope; faith the *foot* of the soul that runs in to him for shelter. Christ is our living *altar*, his satisfaction and intercession like the two horns of the altar; and faith *flee*s in thither for safety from the law and justice of God, which pursue the sinner for his life. Christ is the *bridegroom*; and faith, like the *bride*, takes him by the hand saying, *Even so I take him*. In a word, faith slights and overlooks every thing else to be at Christ, saying with David, Psal. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' and with Paul, 'I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

3. I remark, that faith is here described to be *a receiving of Christ*, according to what we have, John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,' &c. For understanding this, you must know, that Christ, the ever-blessed object of faith, is presented to us in the gospel under a great many different views and aspects, in a correspondence unto which faith receives its denomination. For instance, Is Christ presented under the notion of *meat* to the hungry soul? then faith is expressed by *eating*. Is Christ held out under the notion of *living waters*? then faith is called a drinking. Is he held out as a *refuge*? then faith is called a *fleeing* to him, Heb. vi. 18. Is he held out as a *garment* to the naked? then faith is a *putting him on* for clothing. Thus, I say, according to the aspect in which Christ is presented, faith receives its name; as the sea receives its names according to the different countries or shores it washes. Just so here, when Christ is presented under the notion of

a *gift*, then faith is called a *receiving* him; for giving and receiving are correlates, as you see, John iii. 27, 'A man can receive (or as in the margin, *take unto himself*) nothing, except it be given him from heaven.' Receiving necessarily supposes a giving; and to take what is not given, is but theft, robbery, or vicious intromission. Christ saith, John vi. 32. to a promiscuous multitude, the greatest part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from the sequel of the chapter, 'My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven:' where it is plain, that giving and offering are much the same thing; with this difference only, that the gift or grant of Christ in the word to sinners, is the ground upon which the offer is made. We read, that 'God hath given the earth to the sons of men;' that is, he made a grant of it unto them, to be used and possessed by them. And, by virtue of this grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, when a man came to a piece of land, and set his foot upon it, he might warrantably use it as his own property and possession: and the foundation of this was, that God had *given*, or granted, *the earth to the sons of men*. In like manner, God hath *gifted*, or granted, *his only begotten Son*, John iii. 16. For what end? *That whosoever believeth in him, or takes possession of him by faith, should not perish but have everlasting life*. It is true, indeed, that this will not infer a universal redemption, for I do not now speak of the purchase and application of redemption which without all doubt is peculiar to the elect: but of that giving of Christ in the word which warrants our receiving of him. And this past all peradventure is common to all the hearers of the gospel; insomuch that, as the great Mr. Rutherford expresses it, the reprobate have as fair a revealed warrant to believe as the elect have. Every man has an offer of Christ brought to his door, who lives within the compass of the joyful sound: and this offer comes as close home to him, as if he were pointed out by name. So that none have reason to say, The call and offer is not to me, I am not warranted to embrace Christ; for it is *unto you, O men, that we call, and our voice is to*

the sons of men, Prov. viii. 4. We have God's commission to preach this gospel and to make offer of this Christ to every creature sprung of Adam, Mark xvi. 15; and the event of the publication of this gospel among sinners follows in the next words, 'He that believeth *this gospel* shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' No man ever died, or shall die under the drop of the gospel, for want of a full warrant to embrace a Saviour. No, no, Sirs, your death and blood will be upon your own heads; your unbelief will be the great ground of your condemnation. God will upbraid you at the great day with this, that you had Christ in your offer, and would not embrace him; 'I called, but ye refused; I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded,—therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh,' Prov. i. 24, 26.

4. Upon this description of faith, I remark, that faith is called not only a receiving, but a *resting* upon Christ: Psal. xxxvii. 7, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.' We are not, in my opinion, to think, that receiving is one act of faith, and resting another act of it; they are only different expressions of the same applicatory, justifying faith, or (as some will have it) the rest of faith is a continuation of the reception. There are a great many denominations of faith, of the same divine authority with these two mentioned in the answer of the Catechism, such as eating, drinking, fleeing, entering, coming, trusting, &c. But these are not different acts, but only different expressions of the saving act of faith, making use of, or applying Christ in a suitableness unto the view wherein he is presented in the word of God. This *resting* is equivalent unto *trusting*, as is evident from all these scriptures cited in the Catechism upon this head. I shall only notice further, before I leave this point, that both these expressions of *receiving* and *resting*, whereby faith is here described, do, in the very nature of the thing intended, carry an application and appropriation in them: for when I receive a gift, I take it as my own property; and when I rest upon a

charter or bond, I rest on it as my security: and if this be not allowed, the relieving and supporting nature of faith is in a great measure lost; without it we could never be 'filled with joy and peace in believing.'

5. I remark, that faith receives Christ, and rests *upon him alone*. The poor soul, before the saving revelation of Christ, was grasping at empty shadows, trusting in lying refuges; and, like the men of the old world, when the waters of the deluge were upon the increase, was running to this and the other mountain, where he might be safe from the swelling deluge of God's wrath; but finding the waters to overflow his hiding places, he quits them, and flees to the Rock of ages, saying, 'In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: in the Lord only is the salvation of his people.' 'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus.' Every man by nature being married to the law in Adam, is attempting to climb up to heaven upon the broken ladder of the covenant of works, and to pass the deluge of God's wrath by the fallen bridge of the law. But as sure as the Lord lives, your attempts this way will fail you; for 'by the works of the law, no flesh living shall be justified.' God has established a bridge of communication between heaven and earth, by the obedience, death, and intercession of his eternal Son; and every other passage to heaven but this, is stopped by the justice and holiness of God. John xiv. 6. says Christ, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.'

6. Faith receives Christ, and rests upon him alone *for salvation*. This points at the end the sinner has before him, in his first closing with Christ; he flees unto him for salvation: Acts xv. 11, 'We believe, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved.' By *salvation* here, we are not simply to understand an eternity of happiness in the enjoyment of God after time, but a salvation begun in this present life; salvation from the beginning of it in regeneration, till it be consummated in

glory. The soul, in believing, rests upon Christ for pardon, which is a salvation from the guilt of sin, and condemnatory sentence of the law;—on him for sanctification, which is a salvation from the filth and power of sin;—on him for glorification, which is a salvation from the very inbeing of sin. Alas! the greatest part of the visible church have no other notion of Christ, but only as a Saviour to keep them out of hell, and to deliver them from vindictive wrath. It is true indeed, our Jesus saveth from the wrath that is to come. But how does he that? He does it by saving from sin in the first place: ‘His name,’ saith the angel, ‘shall be called Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.’ His first and great business was to *condemn sin*, that arch-traitor, and first-born of the devil, Rom. viii. 3. ‘to finish transgression, and make an end of sin.’ And therefore it is a salvation from sin, in the guilt, and filth, and power of it, for which faith receives Christ, and rests upon him.

7. I remark, that faith receives and rests upon Christ, ‘as he is offered to us in the gospel.’ This *offer* of Christ, though it be last named in this description of faith, yet is the first thing, in the order of nature, that faith believes: for unless one believe that Christ is offered to him in particular, as the gift of God, and as a foundation of hope and help, he will never receive him, or rest on him for salvation.

Now faith’s reception and application of Christ must be regulated by, and bear a proportion unto the offer that is made of him in the gospel; for here we are told, that faith is a receiving and resting upon him *as* he is offered in the gospel. This qualifies our reception of Christ, and distinguishes the faith of true believers, from that of hypocrites and formalists. And therefore notice this as a thing of the last moment and consequence, whether your faith comes up to the offer, and corresponds thereunto. I shall illustrate this in the four following particulars.

1st. Christ is *freely* offered in the gospel: Isa. lv. 1. ‘Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he

that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' Rev. xxii. 17, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' So faith receives and embraces him as the *free* gift of God. Beware of thinking to buy the pearl with the money and price of your works, duties, and good qualifications; as if by these you were fitted for receiving Christ, or as if God made you the more welcome, on the account of these, to receive his unspeakable gift. No, no, remember that, in the matter of believing, you are to shake your hands from holding of such bribes; for the pearl of great price cannot be bought in such a way. It is true, believing is called a *buying*, Isa. lv. 1. Rev. iii. 18. But then let it be remembered what sort of a buying it is; it is a buying *without money, and without price*. God's price in the market of the gospel is just *nothing*: and yet this is so great a matter with man, that the pride of his heart will not allow him to tell it down. O what a cursed aversion is there in the heart of man against his being a debtor unto grace, and grace only! To *buy without money, and without price*, is a mystery, which the selfish heart of man cannot comprehend. But, Sirs, faith is a grace that comes to get, and not to give: or if it give any thing, it is the ills of the soul; but nothing of good does it pretend to give. The sinner, in believing, upon the matter says, Lord, I give thee my *folly*, and take thee for my only *wisdom*; I give thee my *guilt*, that thou mayest be *the Lord my righteousness*; I give thee my *defilements*, and take thee for *sanctification*; I give thee my *chains and fetters*, that I may be indebted to thee for *redemption and liberty*; I give thee my *poverty*, and take thee for my only *riches*; I give thee my *wicked, wandering, hard, and deceitful heart*, that thou mayest give me the *new heart and new spirit* promised in thy covenant. Thus, I say, Christ is *freely* offered, and must be *freely* received.

2dly. Christ is offered *wholly*; an undivided Christ is offered, and thus also he must be received. There are some who, in their professed and pretended way of believ-

ing, do as it were halve and divide Christ. Some do so far receive him as a *Prophet*, that they submit to the teaching of his word, and thereby come to acquire a great deal of speculative knowledge in the things of God; but, being unacquainted with the teaching of his Spirit, they never come to the knowledge of the truth *as it is in Jesus*. And hence it comes that they never flee to him as a propitiation or submit unto his authority as a King and a Lawgiver: for the execution of the prophetic office paves the way for his reception both as a Priest and King. Some again professedly receive Christ as a *Priest*, to save them from hell and the curse; but, by continuing in their ignorance under a gospel revelation, and walking according to the course of this world, and not according to the laws of Christ, they do evidently reject him, both as a Prophet and King. Others again, and I fear too many in our day, do professedly receive Christ as a *King* and *Lawgiver*, to the prejudice of his priestly office, while they imagine, by their obedience to his law, particularly, the *new gospel law* of faith and repentance (as some call it), to purchase a title to salvation; by which means they either totally exclude the righteousness of Christ, or mingle in their own acts of faith and repentance with the righteousness of Christ, in the affair of acceptance and justification before God; in both which cases, 'Christ can profit them nothing; they are fallen from grace,' as the apostle expressly declares, Gal. v. 2, 4. Thus, I say, many pretended believers halve and divide the offices of Christ. But *is Christ divided?* No; a whole, an entire, an undivided Christ must be received, or no Christ at all; there is nothing of Christ that a believing soul can want. It is true indeed, the first flight of a poor awakened soul, fleeing from the face of the law and justice of God, is to Christ as a *Priest*; because here, and here only, it finds relief and shelter under the covert of everlasting righteousness. But at the same moment in which it receives him as a Priest for justification, it submits unto his kingly authority, saying, as the men of Israel did unto Gideon, 'Rule thou over us:—

for thou hast delivered us out of the hands of our enemies. O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we now make mention of thy name.'

3dly. Christ is offered *particularly* unto every one of the hearers of the gospel; and accordingly faith receives him with *particular* application. The general call and offer reaches every individual person; and God speaks to every sinner as particularly as though he named him by his name and surname: Remission of sin is preached to *you*; we beseech *you* to be reconciled; the promise is unto *you*. And, for my part, I do not know what sort of a gospel men make, who do not admit this. Now, I say, faith, which is the echo of the gospel offer and call, must needs receive an offered Christ and salvation, with particular application to the soul itself. For a person to rest in a general persuasion that Christ is offered to the church, or offered to the elect, or a persuasion of God's ability and readiness to save all that come to Christ, is still but a general faith, and what devils, reprobates, and hypocrites may have. Man, woman, Christ stands at thy door, and thou in particular, even thou art called and commanded to believe in the name of the Son of God.

4thly. God is *heartly* and *in good earnest*, in his offers of Christ, and his salvation. O Sirs! do not think that a God of truth dissembles with you, when he makes offer of his unspeakable gift, or that he offers a thing to you which he has no mind to give. He says, yea, he swears with the greatest solemnity, by his very life, that he is in good earnest, and has no pleasure in your death. And after this, to think that he is not in earnest, what else is it, but to charge a God of truth with lying and perjury? There cannot be a greater affront offered to a man of common veracity. How criminal then must it be to impute such a thing to him, for whom it is impossible to lie, and who hates all fraud and dissimulation in others with a perfect hatred? Thus, I say, God is in good earnest in his offers of Christ; so faith is hearty, and in good earnest in receiv-

ing and applying him: 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'

II. The second thing in the method was to speak a little of the assurance of faith.

I would premise here, that by the assurance of faith, I just mean the *certainty* of faith,—not the absence of doubting in the heart of the believer, but the absence of doubt in the nature of believing. The not attending to this, I apprehend, is what scares many at this doctrine of the assurance of faith. They think, that if there be an assurance in the essence of faith, then it would follow, that every true believer behaved always to have such assurance as to be free of *doubting*; which lies cross to the experience of the generation of the righteous. But this objection goes upon a palpable mistake, as if faith and a believer were one and the same thing. We do indeed assert, that there is no doubting in faith; for faith and doubting are commonly in scripture directly opposed one to another: but though there be no doubting in faith, yet there is much doubting in the believer, by reason of prevailing unbelief and indwelling sin. If it were true that *assurance* is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always assured; by the same way of reasoning it would follow, that *resting* is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always actually staying and resting himself on the Lord; or that *trusting* is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always trusting. It may be as well argued, that seeing is not of the nature of the eye, because sometimes the eye-lids are closed; or that heat is not of the nature of fire, because its heat is not perceptible by reason of the ashes wherewith it is covered; or that light is not of the nature of the sun, because sometimes it is eclipsed by the interposing moon. Remove the ashes, and the heat of the fire will appear; remove interposing bodies, and the sun will give light; open the eye-lids, and the eye will see: so do but remove ignorance, unbelief, and other incumbrances of corruption from faith, and see what the nature of it is then. For it is of the *nature of*

faith in the abstract, that the present question is, and not what lodges in the *believer* who hath faith. In the believer there is *as it were the company of two armies*, grace and corruption, love and enmity, repentance and impenitence, faith and unbelief; but these are not to be confounded together, because they are in the same subject. We must not exclude complacency and delight in the Lord out of the nature of love, because, through remaining enmity and corruption, his love is so overpowered, that he cannot perceive any such thing in him, but rather the reverse of love. The same may be said of other graces. So here we must not conclude, that there is nothing of this applicatory assurance in faith, because of prevailing unbelief, and doubts flowing therefrom.

Having premised these things, I now remark, 1st, That in this faith (which I have been describing) there is a two-fold certainty or assurance, viz., of *assent* and *application*. There is, I say, first, in faith an assurance of *assent*, whereby the man assuredly believes whatever God has said in his word to be true; and that not upon the testimony of men, of ministers, or angels, but upon the testimony and authority of the God of truth, for whom it is impossible to lie, speaking in his own word, and saying, *Thus saith the Lord*. But in a particular manner the soul gives its assent unto the truth of the gospel, and the revelation of the word, concerning the person, natures, offices, undertakings, and performances of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer, Surety, and Saviour of lost sinners. The man's understanding being enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and having got a view of him by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, he finds it to be all true that God has said of Christ in the word: so that he cannot shun in this case to join issue with the apostle, 'This is indeed a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' 1 Tim. i. 15. He sees the truth and veracity of God so much engaged in the covenant and promises thereof, that they are more firm than the everlasting mountains and perpetual hills, Isa. liv. 10. Now, this certainty of assent is, in

scripture dialect, called a *believing the report of the gospel*, Isa. liii. 1.; a *receiving the record of God*, 1 John v. 10, 11.; a *setting to the seal that God is true*, John iii. 33.

But there is, secondly, in faith an assurance of *application*, or *appropriation*, expressed frequently in scripture by a *resting*, a *trusting*, or *confiding* in the Lord, and the veracity of his word of grace and promise. By this act of faith, the soul takes home the promise, and embraces it as a good and sufficient security to itself. It is said of the Old Testament worthies, Heb. xi. 13, that they were 'persuaded of the promises, and embraced them.' Their faith in the promise was a persuasion, or assent with appropriation thereof to their own souls, insomuch that they looked upon the promise as their substance; and hence is that which we have in the 1st verse of that chapter, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for*. This applicatory act of faith, wherein the very life, soul, and sweetness of faith lies, is pleasantly expressed and illustrated in the case of David. God had made a promise to him of the crown and kingdom of Israel, which bore up his spirits, when, through the rage and fury of Saul, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; and viewing the promise, and the fidelity of the promiser, he cries out, Psal. lx. 6, 'God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice:' and because I have the security of his promise I dare say it with confidence and assurance, 'Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.' In like manner, true faith appropriates the mercy of God in Christ to the soul itself in particular, upon the ground of the free and faithful promise of God. I might here demonstrate, that the stream of our best Protestant divines concur in their sentiments as to this matter: I shall only at present quote the definition of faith given by the great and judicious Dr. Owen, in his Catechism, or 'Principles of the Doctrine of Christ;' where, having moved the question, 'What is justifying faith?' His answer is, 'A gracious resting on the free promises of God in Christ Jesus for mercy, with a firm persuasion of heart, that God is a reconciled Father to us in the Son of his love.' According to this account of

faith, the assurance I speak of, viz., a persuasion of the promise, with appropriation, can (as the judicious Calvin speaks) no more be separated from faith, than light can be separated from the sun. It takes home the grace and mercy of God to the soul in particular, which before lay *in common* in the offer of the gospel. And without this particular application, the offer and promise of the gospel can stand us in no stead; but is like a price put in the hand of a fool who has no heart to it. Faith answers and corresponds unto the word of faith, as the seal and the wax answer to one another, Zech. xiii. 9, 'I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.' Faith will not quit its *MY*'s, though all the world should say against it. The marrow of the gospel (as Luther observes) is in these pronouns, *my* and *our*. He bids us read these with great emphasis. It is the common dialect of faith in scripture, to vent itself in words of appropriation; it has a peculiar pleasure and satisfaction in these words, *my* and *our*, and rolls them in its mouth like a sweet morsel. See how sweetly David harps upon this string, Psal. xviii. 1, 2. no less than eight times in a breath does he repeat his appropriating *my*, 'My strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.' Yea, so tenacious is faith in this matter, that it will maintain its *my*'s in the face of a hiding and frowning God: Psal. xxii. 2, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' *My* is a word of faith, says Flavel on the text. So Isa. xlix. 14, 'Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.'

2. I remark, that there is a great difference betwixt the assurance of *faith* (which I have now described), and the assurance of *sense*, which follows upon faith. The assurance of faith is a *direct*, but the assurance of sense is a *reflex* act of the soul. The assurance of faith has its object and foundation from *without*, but that of sense has them *within*. The object of the assurance of faith is a *Christ revealed, promised, and offered in the word*; the object of the assurance of sense is a *Christ formed within us by the Holy Spirit*.

The assurance of faith is the *cause*, that of sense is the *effect*; the first is the *root*, and the other is the *fruit*. The assurance of faith eyes the promise in its *stability*, flowing from the *veracity* of the promiser; the assurance of sense eyes the promise in its *actual accomplishment*. By the assurance of faith, Abraham believed that he should have a son in his old age, because God who cannot lie had promised; but by the assurance of sense he believed it when he got Isaac in his arms. By the first, Noah was sure that he and his family should not perish in the waters of the deluge; but by the last, he was assured of it, when the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat, and the waters were withdrawn again into their proper channels. By the former, the believing Israelites were assured, that Canaan should be their possession, because God had made a grant and a deed of gift of it to them in his promise; by the latter they were assured of it, when they passed Jordan, overthrew the old inhabitants, and divided the good land by lot, as the inheritance of the tribes of Israel. Time would fail me to illustrate this matter by instances that stand upon record in the sacred oracles. Faith asserts its interest in a *future* good, because *promised*; sense asserts its interest in a *present* good because *possessed*. Faith says, *My God will hear me*; sense says, 'My God hath heard me.' Faith says, 'He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness;' sense says, 'He hath brought me forth to the light, and I do behold his righteousness.' Again, faith is conversant about things that are *not seen*, and *hoped for*; sense is conversant about things *seen*, and *actually enjoyed*. Faith says, 'He is *my God*, because he has said in the covenant, *I will be their God*;' sense again says, 'He is *my God*, because *I know* my soul has said unto the Lord, *He is my Lord*.' Faith assures the soul of the remission of sins in the blood of the Lamb, because God has said, 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;' sense again assures the soul of remission, because of the *intimations* of pardon in some *sensible* smiles of the Lord's

countenance, and some saving operations of his grace. By faith I believe my salvation, because it is *purchased*, *promised*, and *possessed*, by my glorious head Christ Jesus: but by sense I believe my salvation, because *I find* this salvation already *begun* in a work of regeneration, and *advancing* in a work of sanctification, 'being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun the good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

3. I remark, that as there is a great difference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of sense; so there is yet a far greater difference between the *my* of *faith* (or of true sense flowing from it), and the *my* of *presumption*. Presumptuous confidence has its *my's*, as well as faith and well grounded experience; as we see plain in the case of Balaam, Numb. xxii. 18, 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord *my* God.' Now, say you, since a presumptuous confidence may speak in the dialect of true faith and experience, wherein lies the difference? This is a very material and momentous question; and with a dependence on the Father of lights, I shall attempt a resolution of it in the few following particulars.

1st. The assurance of faith receives and applies Christ to the soul in particular, as he lies in the *revelation* and *grant* that is made of him to sinners in the *word*, which is the immediate *ground* of faith; whereas presumptuous confidence, though it claims an interest in him, yet does it not upon this bottom, or in God's method and way of conveyance. The apostle tells us, Rom. x. 8, that Christ, and his righteousness and salvation, is brought nigh unto us *in the word of faith*. What is the design of a covenant of grace, and of these declarations, offers and promises of grace, that are made to us in the glorious gospel, but just to bring Christ so near to us, as we by believing may come to apply him and his whole fulness to our own souls? John xx. 31, 'These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.' If we would find

Christ, and eternal life in him, we need not *ascend into heaven*, or *descend into hell*, in search for him, as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 6, 7. But we are to search for him in the 'scriptures, for they are they which testify of him.' Christ is brought near to us in the *testimony* or *record* of God in the word, where 'he gives us eternal life, in his Son Christ Jesus,' 1 John v. 11. Now, faith, in its direct act, I say, takes Christ, and claims him upon this grant and gift that is made of him in the word of grace; and upon no other foundation will it adventure to assert its interest in him. Here lies a fatal flaw in the faith of many hearers of the gospel; they grasp at Christ and his salvation, but they overleap the *gift* and *grant of him* in the word, as the immediate foundation of their faith. But, say you, may not a presumptuous hypocrite pretend to bottom his faith upon the promise, and claim an interest in him, even upon that ground? An answer to this leads me to another and

2d Difference between the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumptuous confidence, namely this, That though the presumptuous person may run away with the promise, yet he does not embrace the promise *as it is in Jesus*, or *as Jesus is in it*. This is a mystery which only can be explained to purpose by him who 'openeth the book, and looses the seven seals thereof.' The view I have of it, you may take up as follows. The covenant, and all the promises of it, are made to Christ as the first heir, both by birth and purchase: he is God's *first-born*, and therefore the *heir* of the inheritance of eternal life. But besides, as the *second Adam*, by his obedience and death, having fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice; the promise of life, which was forfeited by the sin and disobedience of the *first Adam*, comes to be settled upon him, and his seed in him. Now, matters standing thus, the soul, in applying the promise, takes its title thereto, not upon the ground of any thing in itself, but comes in only upon Christ's right and title; his righteousness is the only proper, entitling, meritorious condition of the covenant, and of all the promises thereof. Here lies the failure in presumptuous confidence,

that the man being never cleanly beat off from Adam's covenant, he is always seeking to found his title to the promise in himself, some good condition or qualification wrought in him, or done by him. Thus many attempt to enter themselves heirs to the promises, and to eternal life, but shall never be able: Why? Because they do not by faith enter themselves heirs in Christ, upon his right and title: and 'another foundation can no man lay; for the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Thus, I say, presumptuous faith does not embrace the promise 'as it is in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are yea, and in him amen.' And also, I say, it does not embrace the promise *as Jesus is in it*; for as all the promises are *in Christ*, so Christ is *in all the promises*. And hence it is that the believer, in applying the promise, finding Christ in it, he *eats* it, and it is to him *the joy and rejoicing of his heart*; he finds the Lord in his own word of grace, and this makes it relieving and comforting to his soul; he drinks in *the sincere milk of the word* because therein he *tastes the Lord is gracious*. But now presumptuous faith is more taken up with the naked promises, than with *feeding* the soul with Christ in and by the promise.

3dly. True faith receives and applies Christ *according to the order* that God has laid in his offices; but presumptuous faith *inverts* that order. The order that God has laid in the execution and application of the offices of Christ, is this. Christ comes by his word and Spirit, as a *Prophet*, enlightening the sinner's mind in the knowledge of his lost estate by nature, and the way of his recovery through his atoning blood and satisfaction: upon which the soul, by faith, turns in to him as a *Priest*, taking sanctuary under the covert of his everlasting righteousness; and so submits unto him as a *King*, receiving the law from his mouth, and yielding itself unto his government, from a principle of gratitude to him who has bought it with a price. But now, the presumptuous faith of the legalist inverts and disturbs this comely order laid by infinite wisdom among

the offices of Christ. For in his way of applying Christ, he begins with the *kingly* office: pretending to obey him as a *Lawgiver*; and, upon this ground expects that Christ will save him as a *Priest* by his righteousness; and thus makes his own obedience the ground of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. And what else is this but to bring *money and price*, contrary to the express command of God, Isa. lv. 1. Nothing can be of a more pernicious tendency toward the overthrow of the freedom of God's grace, in the great affair of justification and salvation. Hence it is the apostle so much inveighs against this method of seeking justification in the Galatians; insomuch that he tells them expressly, that by this way they made themselves 'debtors to do the whole law; yea,' says he, 'Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace,' Gal. v. 2—4.

4thly. Another difference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, is this, That the assurance of faith will *maintain its claim, and humble confidence, even under sad challenges*, and a deep and abasing sense of much prevailing iniquity; whereas presumptuous confidence *succumbs and fails* upon the prevalency of sin. The reason of this is, because the ground of presumptuous confidence is within the man; some good disposition and qualification which he finds within him, as he apprehends, which being dashed by the eruption of his reigning lusts, he has no more to look to, the foundation of his confidence is gone. But now, faith builds and bottoms its confidence, not on any thing within, but on something without, namely, the everlasting righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and the mercy of God running in this channel, exhibited in the word of grace. Here it is that faith sets down its foot, and upon this foundation it stands, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. And thus, having the ground of its confidence from without, it is not shaken with every insurrection from within. An instance whereof we see in David, Psal. lxxv. 3. The holy man, in the first part of the verse, cries

out, under a sense of the strength, power, and guilt of sin, 'Iniquities prevail against me.' Well, but what says faith in such a case? 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' Another instance of the like nature, we see in the same holy man, Psal. cxxx. We find him, ver. 3. under such a sense of sin and guilt, that, viewing himself as he stood in the eye of the law and justice, he cannot shun to own, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?' Well, but where does David's faith find a standing in such a case? Only in the mercy and grace of a reconciled God in Christ; and therefore he adds, ver. 4, 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared; and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought unto.'

There are several other differences might be given between the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, if I were not afraid of being tedious. Only, in short, the more of the assurance of faith, or yet of well-grounded experience, the more lowliness, humility, and self-abasement. The higher that the soul is exalted in and by Christ, the lower does it sink in its own eyes, saying with David, when God promised to build him a sure house, and that the Messiah should spring of his loins, 'Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' The poor believer, in this case, sees himself to be such a miracle of rich and sovereign grace, that he is even wrapped up in a silent wonder, and put to an everlasting stand, that he knows not what to say, 'And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more?' But now, the more of a presumptuous confidence there is, the more pride and self-conceit, like the church of Laodicea, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;' accompanied with an undervaluing of others in comparison of themselves, like the proud Pharisee, 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this publican.'

III. The third general head proposed in the method, was to speak a little of *the full assurance of faith*; for there is

a plain gradation in the apostle's way of speaking ; there is *faith*, then the *assurance* of faith, and then the *full* assurance of faith. Having spoken of the two first degrees, I proceed now to the last and highest degree of faith.

And, in one word, I conceive it lies in such 'a firm and fixed persuasion, confidence, or trust in the faithfulness of a God in Christ, pledged in his covenant or promise, as overcomes and tramples upon all difficulties and improbabilities, all doubts and fears as to the actual performance of what is promised in God's time and way ; and all this with particular application to the soul itself.' This description I would illustrate and explain in its several branches, were it not done upon the matter on the former two heads, this being nothing but a higher degree of the self same faith formerly described.

I may remark, however, in general, that such an act of faith we find put forth by Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, 21. where we are told that 'he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God : being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.' This full assurance of faith, though mountains of impediments were in its way, yet makes no more of them than if they were a plain. It overleaps and overlooks them all, fixing its eye only upon the power and faithfulness of the blessed Promiser ; as we see clearly exemplified in the case of Abraham. His own body was dead, and incapable of procreation ; Sarah's womb was barren, and incapable of conception ; and sense and reason in this case would have been ready to conclude that it was impossible ever Abraham should have a son. But we are told, ver. 19. that he entirely abstracted from all considerations of that kind, 'Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' He would not so much as listen to the surmises of carnal reason ; flesh and blood are put out of doors ; and he rests with an assured confidence, without any doubting or hesitation, upon the fidelity of the Pro-

miser, being certain that God would do to him in particular, as he had said, when the time of the vision should come.

In like manner after Abraham had gotten his beloved Isaac, the son of the promise, what a terrible shock, may one think, would it be to his faith in the promise, when God commanded him to take Isaac, of whom the promised seed (Christ) was to come, and offer him upon one of the mountains of Moriah! Gen. xxii. Reason here might be ready to object, and that not without great colour of religion, Can God, who has so severely forbidden murder, require me to imbrue my hands in the blood of my own son? Will not such a thing be an eternal reproach to Abraham and his religion? What will the Egyptians say, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, which dwell in the land? What will Sarah say, and how shall I ever look her in the face? But especially what shall become of the promise, and the veracity of him that made it, saying, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called?* Surely might unbelief and sense say, either this command is a delusion, or else the promise is a lie. But Abraham had a full assurance of faith as to the stability of the promise; and therefore he would upon all hazards obey the command of a promising God: he was fully persuaded, that though Isaac were sacrificed and burnt into ashes, yet out of the very ashes of his sacrificed son, God could, and actually would raise up Isaac again, and so accomplish his own word of promise. And let none imagine that they are not obliged to believe with such a faith as Abraham had; for the apostle expressly tells us, that the history of his faith stands upon record in scripture, 'not for his sake alone, but for us also,' that we, after his example, may be encouraged to 'believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,' Rom. iv. 23, 24.

Object. O, say you, if I had as good a ground for my faith as Abraham had; if I were as sure that the promise were to *me*, as Abraham was, I think I could believe with a full assurance of faith, as he did; but there lies the strait. I answer, You and I have as good a ground of

faith as ever Abraham had. Abraham had a promising God in Christ to trust, and so have we; you have the same God, the same Christ, the same covenant, the same promise as Abraham had. But, say you, God spake to Abraham in *particular, by name*, when he gave him the promise, saying, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' I answer, Although you be not designed by name and surname, as Abraham was, yet a promising God in Christ addresses himself as particularly to you in the word of grace, and dispensation of the covenant and promise, as though he called to you out of heaven by name and surname, saying, 'To you (i. e. to you sinners of Adam's race) is the word of this salvation sent. The promise is unto you that are afar off.' And not only is the promise presented, but an express command of believing superadded, requiring and binding every particular person to take hold of it and embrace it; so that whatever shifts and evasions the unbelieving and deceitful heart may make, the promise of God comes as close and home to every individual hearer of the gospel, as that promise did to Abraham when God spoke to him with an audible voice out of heaven; yea, 'we have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we would do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.'

I do own, as was hinted already, that every true believer does not come the length of Abraham, to believe without staggering; but that is not the question. The present question is, If we have not now as good and firm a ground, and as good a right to believe the promise as Abraham had? If Christ, and his salvation and righteousness, be not brought as near to us in the word of faith as it was unto him? This is what none who understand the privilege of a New Testament dispensation will attempt to deny; yea, I will adventure to say, that the ground of faith is laid before us under the New Testament with a far greater advantage than ever Abraham had; inasmuch as the gospel revelation is much more clear, and brings Christ and his salvation much nearer to us than ever they were under any period of the Old Testament dispensation. *Abraham saio*

his day only afar off; whereas we live in that very day which he saw at such a prodigious distance; and therefore we have much more ground to believe without staggering than he had. And therefore seeing we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; and seeing we have a new and living way consecrated for us through the veil of his flesh; and seeing we have an High Priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, &c.

IV. The fourth thing proposed in the method, was to inquire into the grounds of this doctrine; or what it is that faith has to build its confidence upon, in drawing near to God with full assurance of acceptance? In answer to this question, I shall not at present enter upon the particular grounds specified by the apostle in the preceding verses, but shall simply call your attention to the immediate ground of faith, or full assurance thereof, in drawing near to God, which is God's own promise of acceptance through Jesus Christ, with which promises the word everywhere abounds, Isa. lx. 7. and lvi. 7. Mark xi. 24. Matth. vii. 7. John xiv. 13, 14. Now, faith, eyeing and pleading the promise of God in Christ, has many things to bear it up into a full assurance; I shall instance a few of many.

1. The *grace, mercy, and goodness* of a promising God revealed and proclaimed in the word, is a noble ground for sinners, and yet more for saints, to trust him, and draw near to him through Christ, with a full assurance of faith: Psal. xxxvi. 7, 'How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.' It is cross to the very dictates of nature for a man to trust one whom he apprehends to be an enemy. Yea, if we have but a jealousy that one bears us an ill will, or designs our hurt, we will not trust or confide in him. But persuade a man that such a one is his friend, that he hath an entire love and kindness for him, and wants only an opportunity to do him the greatest services he is capable, in that case he will trust him without hesitation. Just so is it in the case in hand: so long as

we conceive God to be an implacable enemy, our prejudice and enmity against him will remain; and while enmity against God stands in its full strength, it is absolutely impossible we can have any trust or confidence in him. Instead of drawing near to him with full assurance of faith, we flee from him like our first parents, under the awful apprehensions of his wrath and vengeance. But let us once be persuaded that he is a God of love, grace, pity, and good-will in Christ, then, though never till then, will we put our trust under the shadow of his wings.

2. Faith grounds its assurance upon the infinite *power* of a promising God. Being once persuaded of his love, mercy, and good-will in Christ, it proceeds to fasten its foot upon *everlasting strength*, as fully able to fulfil what he has promised, saying, I know that thou canst do every thing, and *there is nothing too hard for thee*. Indeed, infinite power, armed with wrath and fury, is the terror of a guilty sinner; but infinite power, animated with infinite love, proclaiming, *Fury is not in me*, through the *ransom that I have found*, is a noble ground of trust, and may embolden a guilty sinner to 'take hold of his strength, that he may make peace with him.' Hence it is that the power of God in Christ is frequently presented in scripture as a ground of trust, Isa. xxvi. 4, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' The faith of Abraham founded itself upon this rock of the power of God, in that forecited instance, Rom. iv., when he believed without staggering at the promise. Being first persuaded of God's good-will toward him, in giving him a promise of the Messiah to spring of his loins, 'in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed,' he next fixes the eye of his faith upon the power of this promising God, and was 'fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.' So, Matth. ix. 27. we read of two blind men following Christ, sending their cries after him, 'Thou son of David, have mercy on us.' They first believed that Christ was the promised Messiah, the son of David; and in this they saw mercy and good-will to man upon earth, he being the

seed of the woman, that should bruise the head of the serpent. Well, Christ leads them on next to take a view of the power of God in him, as a further ground of trust and confidence, ver. 28, 'Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this?' They answer, *Yea, Lord*: and thereupon Christ says unto them, ver. 29, 'According to your faith, be it unto you.' Thus, I say, faith grounds its trust, confidence, or assurance, in drawing near to God through the new and living way, upon the *power* of a promising God.

3. The *veracity* and *faithfulness* of a God in Christ, pawned in the promise, is another ground upon which faith builds when it draws near with a full assurance. Faithfulness in God, and faith in man, are correlates; and there is such a connexion and relation betwixt these two, that our faith cannot subsist without faithfulness in God. And, on the other hand, a revelation of God's faithfulness would have been needless if there were not some to believe him. The light would be useless, if there were not an eye to see it; and the eye would be useless, if there were no light. To an unbelieving sinner, the revelation of the divine faithfulness is as unprofitable as light is to a blind man; and our faith would be like an eye without light, if there were not faithfulness in God. Yea, faithfulness in God is the very parent of faith in man. Faith is at first begot and wrought in the soul by some discovery of the divine faithfulness in the word of grace, and it is maintained and increased in the same way and manner. Whence is it that some do believe, and others do not, who equally enjoy the same revealed warrants and grounds of faith? The matter is this; the faithfulness of God in the covenant and promise is revealed by the Spirit to the one, and veiled and hid from the other, 'the god of this world blinding the minds of them which believe not.' And whence is it, that at one time a believer is 'strong in faith, giving glory to God,' and at another time 'staggers through unbelief?' The reason is this; the faithfulness of God at one time is so visible to him, that he sees it to be like a *mountain of brass* under him; at another time his light is so dark and

dim, that he imagines the promise, and the faithfulness of the Promiser, to be but like a *broken reed*, not able to bear his weight. But, O Sirs, what can be ground of assurance, yea of the highest and fullest assurance of faith, if not the veracity of that God who 'hath righteousness for the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness for the girdle of his reins?'

4. A fourth ground (taken in connexion with the former) upon which faith may build its assurance, in drawing near to God by the new and living way, is, the *indorsement* or *direction* of the promise of welcome through Christ. To whom, say you, is the promise indorsed? I answer, It is directed to *every man* to whom the joyful sound of this everlasting gospel reacheth, John iii. 16. There you see that the promise of acceptance and of eternal life through Christ, reaches forth its arms to a lost world; 'Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' So here, Whosoever draweth near to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way, through the mediation of the great high priest, shall obtain grace and mercy to help them in time of need. The covenant of grace and promises thereof, are so framed by Infinite Wisdom, in the external dispensation of the gospel, that they look to every man and woman, and, as it were, invite them to believe, and encourage them to enter into the holiest. He that sits on a throne of grace calls every one within his hearing to come for grace and mercy, assuring them, that come to him who will, 'he will in no wise cast out.' And we that are the heralds and ministers of the great King, whose name is 'the Lord, merciful and gracious,' have warrant and commission to proclaim, that *to you, men, and the sons of man, is the word of this salvation sent: The promise is directed unto you as a ground of faith, even 'to you and to your seed, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.'* There is not the least peradventure, but the call or command of believing is to every one, otherwise unbelief could not be their sin. Now, the promise, in the indorsement and direction

thereof, must be as extensive as the command. These two are inseparably linked together, both in the external dispensation and in the inward application of the Spirit; inasmuch that whosoever is commanded to believe, has right to the promise as the immediate ground of his faith; and whosoever actually believes, and builds upon this ground, has the promise in his possession. Take away the promise from the command of believing, and you separate what God has joined together, and in effect command men to build without a foundation. It is true, Christ is the object of faith; but it is as true that he can only be the object of faith to us as he is brought near in the word of faith or promise, Rom. x. 8. And therefore, seeing the promise is to you and me, and every one who hears this gospel, I may warrantably say with the apostle, Heb. iv. 1, 'Let us fear, lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.'

5. Let it encourage us to draw near in full assurance of faith, that there is no *lawful impediment* to hinder our access and success, in entering with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Every bar and hinderance that stood in our way is mercifully removed by our *great high priest*, who is *over the house of God*. All the impediments that can be pleaded on God's part are the *law, justice, and holiness* of God; and all the impediment that can be pleaded on our part is *sin*. Now, none of these ought to hinder our drawing near in this new and living way, with full assurance of faith.

As for the *law*, that cannot be a just impediment to hinder our access; for that moment the soul enters by Christ, as the *way* to the Father, the law gets its end, Christ being 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Now, can the law be against its own end, or that which gives it its due? All that the law demands is a perfect and sinless righteousness; give it that, and it has no more to seek. But this the law gets that moment a sinner believes, or draws near by the blood of Jesus. 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,

God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh : that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 3, 4.

Again, as for the *justice* of God, this is ready to scare us, who are guilty sinners, from so much as looking toward the holiest, or the place where God's honour dwells. But this can be no impediment either, to our drawing near by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith. Why? That which justice demands is a complete satisfaction for the injury done to the honour and authority of God, by the breach and violation of the holy and righteous law, which was a transcript of the purity and equity of his nature. Now, when a sinner draws near or enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, he gives justice that which it wants, namely, a *ransom* of infinite value, even the *ransom* that God has *found*, the *propitiation* that God has *set forth* in the gospel, to be received by faith. The man, in believing, as it were, presents this ransom unto justice for the sin of his soul; and whenever justice sees this ransom of the blood of Jesus in the hand of faith, it assails and acquits the soul from all law penalties, declaring that *now there is no condemnation to that man*, Rom. viii. 1.

As for the *holiness* of God, that seems to stand as an insuperable bar in our way of entering into the holiest, by reason of the blot, defilement, and pollution of sin, which renders us utterly loathsome in the sight of the holy One of Israel. But, glory to God in the highest, this bar is also removed by the blood of Jesus; for that moment a sinner comes under the covert of this blood, and draws near to God under this covering, he hath his *heart* thereby 'sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water.' That same moment that the righteousness of the second Adam is extended to us for justification, his Spirit enters into us for sanctification, renewing us in the whole man, after the image of God. And the blood of Jesus not only cancels the guilt of sin, which made us obnoxious to the law and justice of God, but it hides and covers the

filth of sin from the eyes of immaculate holiness. Yea, holiness is so much the sinner's friend in drawing near through the blood of Jesus, that this attribute of the divine nature is pawned in the promise of acceptance made to Christ and his seed, Psal. lxxxix. 2, 35.

As for impediments on our part, I shall only say at the time, that the sum-total of them all amounts to this, that we are *sinners*, and so wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, that we cannot think that ever God will receive or welcome us. But at once to roll away this impediment, let it be considered, that this new and living way of access into the holiest is only calculated for sinners: 'Christ calls not the righteous (or innocent), but sinners,' to enter by him as the way to the Father. If you were not sinners, but righteous, as Adam was before the fall, you would not need to enter *by the blood of Jesus*. But seeing the way and door to the holiest is just shaped and calculated for the sinner, let not the sinner scare to enter by it into the presence of God, especially when he calls us, who are sinners, to *draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith*. Faithful is he that hath promised acceptance in the beloved.

V. I proceed now to wind up the whole of this discourse in some practical improvement thereof, which I shall endeavour to manage, as briefly as I can, in the few following inferences.

Inf. 1. From this doctrine we may see *the excellency of the grace of faith*. When it takes a view of the *blood of Jesus*, of the *new and living way*, and of the *High Priest over the house of God*, it can *draw near* to the *holiest* with *full assurance* of welcome. And it is not without warrant that faith promises itself welcome from the Lord in its approaches to him through Christ. God has made the same, yea, a much greater *grant* to the grace of faith, than Ahasuerus made unto Esther, chap. ix. 12, 'What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request? and it shall be done.' Compare this with John xiv. 13, 14, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that

the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.' So Mark xi. 24, 'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' As Ahasuerus put a peculiar honour upon Esther, and preferred her above all the maids in his kingdom, so God, the King of kings, stamps a peculiar honour and excellency upon the grace of faith, preferring it above all the other graces; on which account it may say with Mary, Luke i. 48, 'He hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden.' Though God be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: though he be the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, yet he dwells with the humble: he delights to choose and put honour upon the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of this world; yea, he chooses 'things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.' Faith is the meanest and lowest, the poorest and most beggarly of all the other graces; for all the other graces give something unto God, whereas faith, like a mere beggar, comes not to give any thing, but to get and receive all; and yet God takes this beggar and sets it among *princes*, to allude unto that expression, Psal. cxiii. 7, 8. Such honour and preferment does God put upon this grace, that though he has said, 'He will not give his glory to another;' yet so little jealousy has he of the grace of faith, that he, as it were, sets it upon the throne with himself, ascribing things to it which are proper and peculiar unto himself only; he sets the jewels of his crown upon the head of faith.

Inf. 2. See from this doctrine *the true way of joy and comfort*. Perhaps there may be some poor soul going mourning without the sun, saying, 'Oh that I were as in months past.' Once in a day I thought I could say, 'The candle of the Lord shined upon my head;' but alas! the scene is now altered, 'the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me;' how shall I recover my wonted joy in the Lord? Well, here is the way to it; go forth out of yourselves, by a direct act of faith; take Christ anew in the embraces of your souls upon the free call and offer of the

gospel; and, with Simeon, ye shall be made to *bless God*. It is the wreck of the comfort of the generality of God's people, in our day, that they continue poring within themselves upon their frames, their graces, their experiences, their attainments, without going forth by faith unto the fulness of a Redeemer for relief. And while we do so, we are just like mariners at sea; while they sail among shallow waters, near the shore, they are always afraid of striking upon rocks or running upon sands, because they want deepness of water; but when they launch forth into the main ocean they are delivered of these fears, being carried far above rocks and sands. So while the believer continues among the shallow waters of his graces, duties, experiences, and attainments, he cannot miss to be harassed with continual fears, because the waters of divine grace are but ebb while we remain there; but when by faith we launch out into that full ocean of grace that is in Christ, then fears, doubts, and perplexities vanish; the soul is carried up above all these, being *strong*, not in the created grace that is in itself, but 'in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead.' So then, I say, if ye would surmount your fears, and recover your joy and comfort in the Lord, study to live by faith upon the Son of God; for we are 'filled with joy and peace in believing.'

Inf. 3. Is it the will of God that we should draw near to him in Christ, with full assurance of faith? then let us study *to do the will of God in this matter*. Seeing the *door of the holiest is open, the way consecrated for us, and the High Priest entered within the veil; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith*. I exhort you not only to *believe*, but to be *strong in the faith*. Study to have a faith proportioned, in some measure, to the grounds of faith already mentioned.

But here a question will readily be moved, Is it the duty of all the hearers of the gospel, at first to believe after this manner, or to draw near with a full assurance of faith? For answer.

1. I grant, that the first approaches of a sinner to God in Christ by faith, are for the most part weak and feeble, attended with much fear and trembling, through the prevalency and strength of unbelief, a sense of utter unworthiness, and awful impressions of the glorious majesty of God; all which readily makes him, with the publican, to 'stand afar off, smiting on his breast, crying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' But yet,

2. I affirm, that there is sufficient ground laid, in the gospel revelation and promise, for a sinner even in his first approach to God in Christ, to come with full assurance of faith. This will evidently appear, if we consider, that by the glorious gospel, a wide door of access is cast open unto all without exception; all grounds of unbelief and distrust are removed, every bar and impediment which might make them to halt and hesitate is rolled away. This is given in commission to ministers, to 'prepare the way of the people, to cast up, cast up the highway, to gather out the stones, and lift up a standard for the people,' Isa. lxii. 10. When we call sinners to believe, we do not call them to come with a weak faith, or with a doubting, disputing faith; but we invite and call them to come with assurance of acceptance and welcome, grounded upon his infallible word of promise, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'

3. I find the Lord directing sinners, even in their first approaches, to draw near to him in Christ, with full assurance of faith, Jer. iii. 19, 'But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations?' Here is a puzzling question, such as none can answer but God himself. Well, but what is the answer which the Lord puts in the sinner's mouth? 'Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me.' The first breath of the Spirit of adoption is, *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. a word of faith or confidence. Christ puts words of assurance in our mouths, teaching us, when we pray, to say, *Our Father which art in heaven.* And every one apart is to say, *My Father which art in heaven, &c.* Agreeable to which

is the direction given, Jam. i. 6. We are told, ver. 5, that 'if any man (be he a saint or a sinner) lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' Well, here is noble encouragement to all; but they who would speed well, are ordered to come in the full assurance of faith, ver. 6, 'But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,' &c.

4. I find sinners in their first approaches sometimes practising this direction, and coming with words of assurance. Thus in Jer. iii. 22. says the Lord, 'Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.' And what is the first echo of faith unto this call? 'Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.' So Zech. xiii. 9, 'I will say, It is my people;' there is the word of grace, and ground of faith: and the language of faith, correspondent thereunto immediately follows, 'They shall say, The Lord is my God.' Isa. xlv. 24, 'Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Besides all this, none, I think, can doubt but it is the sinner's duty, at first, in obedience to the first commandment, to know and acknowledge the Lord as God, and as his God; and how this can be done but by believing, I cannot tell.

Well then, seeing there is such a door of faith opened to sinners in the gospel, let sinners enter in with boldness, and be saved: John x. 9, 'I am the door,' says Christ: 'by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'

Object. 1. May the sinner say, How shall I adventure to draw near with assurance of acceptance? *I have such a burden of sin and guilt lying upon me, and it has such a prevalency and ascendant over me, that my confidence is quite marred: for my part, I may well say with David, Psal. xl. 12, 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me.'* To this I answer, (1.) By way of concession, that it is indeed impossible for a person living in the love and practice of sin, to draw near

to God with the confidence of faith; for in the very act of drawing near, the *heart is purified by faith*, in the blood of Jesus; or, as it is expressed in the latter clause of the text, he hath his 'heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and *his* body washed with pure water.' In believing we 'cease to do evil, and learn to do well.' But there is a great difference betwixt iniquity *prevailing* in the heart, and iniquity *regarded* in the heart. In the last case, a person cannot draw near with acceptance: Psal. lxxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart: the Lord will not hear me;' that is, If I love it, or give it kindly harbour in my heart, God will not accept of me, or my prayers. Because in that case he could not draw near with a *true heart*, which is an inseparable concomitant of the assurance of faith. But in the former case, viz., of prevailing iniquity, it is not only possible, but actually preceded, for a person to draw near with the full assurance of faith; as we see in the instance of David, Psal. lxxv. 3, 'Iniquities,' says he, 'prevail against me.' But what follows? 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' Now, this being the case pointed at in the objection, it ought to be no prejudice or hinderance to your drawing near unto the holiest by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith, seeing he is faithful who hath promised acceptance in the beloved.

(2.) Whereas, O sinner, thou complainest of a burden of sin and guilt lying upon thee, which mars thy confidence; I only ask, For whom, thinkest thou, was the way to the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus? was it for the righteous, or for guilty sinners? An innocent or holy person needs no such way of access: it is only calculated and shapen for the guilty criminal and transgressor, such as thou art; and 'though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,' that moment thou enterest in by the blood of Jesus: and, therefore, *let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith*. Whither can a guilty sinner go, but to the Lord pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin? Whither can a polluted sinner go, save to the fountain

opened for sin and for uncleanness? (3.) The boldness and assurance of faith is not only consistent, but is always accompanied with a soul-abasing sense of utter unworthiness, because of the guilt, and filth, and power of sin. And the reason of this is plain, because in believing, the man through an uptaking of sin and guilt, is carried out of himself to seek his standing and the ground of his confidence in another, even in Christ, and the mercy of God in him. So David, Psal. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,' &c. And therefore let a sense of sin, in its guilt and prevalency, carry thee out of thyself, to draw near by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith. It was a preposterous way of reasoning in Peter, to say, 'Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' He should rather have said, Lord, come to me, for I am a sinful man; for where can a sinner be better than with the Saviour of sinners?

Object. 2. You call us to draw near with the assurance of faith: but, alas! how can I do this, *seeing I am in the dark about my interest in Christ?* If I knew that I had peace with God, my sin pardoned, my person accepted, and that I were in a state of grace and favour, in that case I could draw near with confidence indeed. But the case is quite otherwise: clouds and darkness are round about me; I doubt if ever God dealt with my heart effectually by his grace: How, then, can I draw near with the confidence of faith? Ans. If you never draw near to God with the assurance of faith, till you come to a sensible assurance of your interest in Christ, and of your being in a state of grace, you will never draw near to him in your life. And the reason of this is, because a sensible assurance of an interest in Christ, is the fruit and effect of the soul's drawing near by faith; and the effect can never go before its cause. The way to come at that assurance of a state of grace, is to draw near with the assurance of faith, grounded, not upon any gracious work within you, but upon the gracious promise of God in his word, and the mediation of

the great High Priest over the house of God. Heb. iv. 14, 16, 'Seeing we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,—let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,' &c. Faith, as I said just now, still seeks a ground of confidence, not in grace received, or any thing within the man, but only in Christ, and the gracious promise of acceptance through him; and therefore, the best way in the world to get above all these doubts, fears, and perplexities, regarding your gracious state, is, by a direct act of faith, to go to God by the new and living way, assuring and persuading your own souls, that a God of grace and love 'hates putting away,' Isa. i. 10. He that 'walketh in darkness, and hath no light,' what course is he to take? 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God:' where by the *name of the Lord*, we are to understand the grace and mercy, power and faithfulness of God, pawned in the promises of the covenant. Here we are to cast anchor; upon these we are to build the confidence and assurance of faith, when we have nothing to look or trust to. Thus did Abraham, the father of the faithful, Rom. iv. 20, 21; and so must we, if we would be the true seed of Abraham.

Object. 3. You call sinners to believe, and to believe with an assured faith: But to what purpose is all this? may one say, *faith is 'the gift of God,' the work of his Spirit*; I have no power to believe, till God work it in me: and therefore all this labour, in persuading us to believe, might be spared. I answer, Your own inability to believe, by any strength or power of yours, is so far from being an argument against, that it is one of the strongest arguments why you should believe. For when we call you to believe, we do not call you to work or do anything by your own power; but, to trust in the doings and strength of another, who, as he has wrought all your works *for you*, so he engages himself by promise, to work all your works *in you*; and particularly, being 'the Author and Finisher of faith,' is ready and willing to 'fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with

power.' Every creature answers its name; and will God be wanting to answer his? No, surely; the name that he takes to himself is declarative of his nature: and therefore since he has taken this name to himself, of being the *Author of Faith*, and the *Finisher* thereof, we may, with the greatest assurance of faith, 'trust in *this* name of the Lord,' that he will both begin the good work and carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus. And this very committing of the work of faith unto him, from a sense of your own inability, is that believing which we urge and call you to. Faith is a grace which just springs out of the ruin of all self-sufficiency and excellency; finding neither righteousness nor strength within, it looks abroad, and cries, 'Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Unbelief and carnal reason are ready to argue, Because God by his Spirit must do all, therefore we will sit still and do nothing. But the Spirit of God, whose reasonings I am sure are infinitely better, argues after a quite different manner, Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' O what glorious encouragement is here for a poor impotent sinner to essay and aim at believing! Here is the arm of Omnipotency, reaching forth itself for thy help and throughbearing in the work he calls thee to. Up therefore, and be doing, for 'thy God commands thy strength;' and therefore let him be 'the glory of thy strength.'

Object. 4. Let me aim at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, *if I be not among God's elect*; for it is only they that are *ordained to eternal life*, that *do believe*. Ans. This is an ordinary sophism of the grand enemy of salvation, whereby he discourages sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus; and the fallacy or weakness of it will easily appear, by applying the objection to the ordinary businesses of human life. When meat is set before you, do you decline to take or use it, for this reason that you do not know whether God has ordained it for

you? Do not ye say, Meat is for the use of man, and this meat is set before me, and therefore I will take it. Ye do not say, I will not plough or sow my ground, because I know not if ever God has decreed that it shall bring forth; or, I will not go home to my house, because I do not know if ever God has decreed I should go that length. Ye would reckon a man mad, or beside himself, who would argue at this rate, in affairs of this nature. Why, the case is the very same: as the secret decrees of heaven lie quite out of the road in the management of the affairs of this life; so neither are they at all to be the measure or rule of our actings in the great concerns of eternity: 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children.' And the ground of your condemnation at the great day will not be, because ye were not elected, but because ye would not believe. The reprobate Jews were cut off *because of their unbelief*, Rom. xi. 7. and 20. I shall only add, that as ye cannot know that the meat set before you is yours in possession, till ye take it; so neither can ye ever know that Christ was ordained for you, till ye take him into your possession by faith. And therefore ye must believe in Christ, before ye know your election; otherwise ye shall never know it, and shall never believe either.

Object. 5. I have tried believing so long and so often, that *I am quite wearied, my strength is gone*, and yet no power from above; what shall I do? God takes no notice of me. Ans. Isa. xl. 27, 28, &c., 'Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.' Thou imaginest that God's helping hand is withdrawn, and that he takes no notice of thy endeavours to believe. But why sayest thou

so? He is nearer than thou apprehendest: Behold he standeth behind our wall, ready to give grace, and mercy to help in time of need, ready to give power to the faint, and strength to them that have no might: and power from on high to believe is nearest, when we are most carried out of ourselves in point of strength and sufficiency. And therefore give it not over: 'Wait, I say, on the Lord; for they that wait upon him shall renew their strength.' It is only the weak man that will lean to the help of another: now, faith is a leaning on Christ when we cannot stand alone. Cant. viii. 5, 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' It is only the wearied man that will sit down and rest him: now, faith is the soul's resting in or upon Christ, Psal. xxxvii. 7, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.' Heb. iv. 3, 'We which have believed do enter into rest.' When a man can do nothing else, when he is so feeble that he cannot put his hand to a turn, yet he can rest him: so here, because thou art weak, and without strength for any work of the law, therefore the Lord calls thee to rest thy weary, sinking soul upon the Lord Jesus, on whom he has laid thy help. And therefore let thy weakness encourage thee to revive, instead of discouraging thee.

But now, I come to offer a word of exhortation to those whose hearts do fall in with the foregoing exhortation. *Do ye now believe*, though in the weakest degree? Let me exhort you not to rest in a low measure of faith, but press after the highest degree of it. Forget things behind, reach forth unto things that are before; believe better than ye have yet done. Go on from faith to faith, and thus learn to *draw near with a true heart, in FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH*: and thus you shall be the children of faithful Abraham, who 'staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform.' You see what was the ground of Abraham's faith, by which he believed without staggering; it was nothing else but the promise

of life and salvation through a Messiah to come. Well, you have the very same ground of faith laid before you, with a far greater advantage now under the New Testament, namely, the promise of acceptance, peace, pardon, grace and glory, through a Messiah who is already come, and finished the work which the Father gave him to do; and therefore believe without staggering, as he did.

That I may quicken you to press after a higher measure of faith, I offer the following considerations.

1. Little faith is *not easily discerned*: it is but like a grain of mustard seed lying in the ground, which one can scarce distinguish from the dust which lies under his feet; and when faith is not discerned, God loses the glory of his own grace, and you also lose the comfort of it.

2. The world we live in *requires a strong faith*. It is a den of lions, and a mountain of leopards; the roaring lion is going about seeking to devour: Red seas and Jordans of trouble lie in our way to Canaan, through the howling wilderness. Storms and tempests of persecution and tribulation may blow, which will make the strong believer to stagger and shake: and if so, has not the weak believer reason to fortify himself, by studying to believe better than he has done? for it is by faith that we stand in an evil day.

3. Contentment with little faith, *is no good sign of the reality of faith*; for (as was hinted before) it is of the nature of true grace, to breathe after its own perfection. They who have the least degree of it press after the highest. They that know the Lord, follow on to know him.

4. Consider *the advantages of a strong faith beyond a weak*. 1st. A strong faith hath a *firm and solid peace* coming along with it: Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.' But weak faith has its peace disturbed at every turn of providence. 2dly. Strong faith brings *great joy* with it; hence we are said to be 'filled with joy and peace in believing;' yea, the joy of a lively faith is a 'joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' 1 Pet. i. 8. But now the weak believer, though he may perhaps

sometimes be filled with the joy of sense, yet he has but little of the joy of believing. Hence it is, that whenever sense is withdrawn, he is in the very suburbs of hell, crying, 'The Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, his promise fails for evermore.' 3dly. Strong faith is *more steady in a storm* than a weak faith is. Strong faith, when the storm blows, casts out the anchor of hope, and rides in safety, crying, 'I will not be afraid, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, and though the waters thereof roar.' But now, weak faith, like Peter walking on the waters, is ready at every billow to cry out, 'Master, I perish.' When created comforts fail, when the fields yield no increase, weak faith is ready to say, I and my family will perish: but strong faith will say, Up my heart, there is no fear; 'my bread shall be given me, my water shall be sure;' because a God of truth hath said it, whose is the 'earth, and the fulness thereof.' He that 'feeds the ravens,' will not let his children starve; he that 'clothes the lilies,' will not let me go naked. 4thly. Strong faith has *more confidence and boldness* in entering into the holiest, more influence and interest in heaven, than weak faith has, John xiv. 13, 14. Mark xi. 24. James i. 6. Weak faith, although God will not reject its suit, yet its returns are not so clear and full; yea, I will adventure to say, that unbelieving doubts, and fears, and jealousies, mar the success of many a good petition. 5thly. Strong faith makes *the approaches of death* more easy than they are to the weak believer. Strong faith takes up the telescope of the promise, and looks beyond death, to the land afar off, and rejoiceth in the hope of the glory of God, saying, as the head Christ did, Psal. xvi. 9, 'My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope:' for he hath 'shewed me the path of life,' the new and living way to these 'rivers of pleasures,' and that 'fulness of joy,' which are 'at God's right hand for evermore.' Strong faith, viewing an exalted Redeemer, sees death and hell among the trophies of his victory, and thereupon triumphs over it as a vanquished and slain

enemy, saying, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through Jesus Christ my Lord.' But now, weak faith shivers and trembles at the approaches of death, lest it should be swallowed up in the swellings of that Jordan. Let these considerations, I say, quicken you to breathe after the increase of your weak faith, that you may draw near with full assurance of faith.

SERMON VIII.

THE PROFITABLENESS OF GOOD WORKS.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.—Tit. iii. 8.

THE apostle having, in the preceding part of this chapter, particularly from the 4th verse, and downwards, given a brief summary or epitome of the doctrine of the gospel, and of the free grace of God towards sinners, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, proceeds, in this 8th verse, to shut up the whole with a serious advice unto Titus, what use to make of the doctrine of grace among his hearers; namely, to urge them, upon that footing, to the study of practical godliness as great gain: *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, &c.*

Where we have these things deserving of consideration,

1. We have the apostle's epilogue, or conclusion, with which he shuts up that grave and weighty subject, which he had been treating in the preceding verses, *This is a faithful saying.* Some indeed do understand this as a preface unto what follows; but I find the generality of interpreters do rather connect the asseveration with what went before, and particularly with what the apostle had asserted in the verse immediately preceding, to wit, 'That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;' and then immediately adds, *This is a faithful saying.* The apostle foresaw, by the

spirit of prophecy, that the doctrine of grace would meet with strange opposition in after ages of the world; and knew that opposition was already begun in his own day, as appears from his epistle to the Galatians; and therefore ratifies it with the greater solemnity, *This is a faithful saying.* From whence I observe by the by, That as ministers of Christ are to declare the whole counsel of God, so there are some truths that need to be more vouched and dwelt upon than others; particularly truths that are more fundamental, and most controverted by gainsayers.

2. In the words we have an apostolic command given unto Titus, and in him to all ministers of the gospel, *These things I will that thou affirm constantly.* The word in the original rendered *affirm*, is borrowed from the practice of those who, when they buy or sell a thing, do oblige themselves to maintain the claim and title against all lawsuits or entanglements. Titus, and other ministers, are not only to teach the doctrines of the gospel, but confirm and make them good against all the cavils or questions that may be moved about them.

3. In the words we have a particular doctrine which the apostle recommends to be taught by Titus, namely, 'That they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.' Where notice the foundation of all good works, and that is *believing in God*, to wit, in God as he is manifested in Christ, God reconciling the world to himself; for out of Christ he cannot be the object of faith, but of terror, to a guilty sinner. Now, this believing in God is the very foundation of all good works: for 'without faith it is impossible to please God:' and they that have believed, are enjoined *to maintain good works.* The word in the original is borrowed from the military, particularly such as set themselves on the front of the battle, and march forward to encourage the whole army to follow them. 'Believers,' would the apostle say, 'must not only do good works, but must be patterns and ensamples thereof to others;' according to that of Christ, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and

glorify your Father which is in heaven.' But the import of this you may meet with more fully afterwards.

4. We have a very cogent and weighty reason why believers are to maintain good works; why? 'These things,' says he, 'are good and profitable unto men.' The apostle, in the 5th verse, had secluded good works from any causality or influence on our justification or eternal salvation: 'Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us.' Now, lest any should allege, that, in that case, good works were altogether useless, he adds this as a caveat, and says, in effect, 'Do not mistake it, for although your good works be not profitable for justification, yet they are good and profitable unto men on many other accounts:' of which we may hear likewise afterward.

The doctrine I notice from the words is this:

Doctr. 'That as faith, or believing, is the source of good works; so these good works, which are the fruit of believing, are good and profitable unto men. Or take it thus, That they who have truly believed, are to be careful to maintain good works, these being good and profitable unto men.' The foundation of this doctrine from the words is obvious.

In speaking to it, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the method following.

I. I would speak a little of these good works, which they who have believed in God are called to maintain.

II. Of that believing in God, which is the source and fountain of good works.

III. Show, that these good works, flowing from faith, are good and profitable unto men.

IV. Apply the whole.

I. I say, I would speak a little of good works. Where I would show, What sort of works they are that may be called *good works*. In general, then, you should know, that, considering the law as a covenant, or an abstracted rule of righteousness, as contradistinguished from the gospel, there are no works done by men that can be called

good works; for 'there is none that doth good (in this respect), no not one.' 'In many things we offend all.' The most blameless and perfect actions of the most consummate believer that ever drew breath in God's air are not in this sense good works. For while in this state of sin and imperfection, he cannot perform a work legally good, because of the mixture of sin that attends his best performances. And hence it is, that we find the saints in scripture owning, that they could not *stand, if God should mark iniquity; that all their righteousness is as filthy rags; that their goodness extendeth not to him.* O Sirs, if God should 'lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,' we, and all our good works, would be for ever rejected, like *reprobate silver.* And therefore we have little reason to think or imagine that God is a debtor to us for any thing we do, or that our good works do procure the favour of God, his acceptance, or a title unto life. But our works are called *good works*, as having a respect unto the law, considered as a rule of duty, in the sweet hand of a Mediator. He makes his yoke easy, and his burden light, to his people, by accepting of their weak endeavours, through his perfect obedience and satisfaction, as good, though attended with manifold imperfections. Now to constitute an action good in an evangelical sense, there are several things requisite.

1. To make a work a good work, it must *be done by a good and holy person*, renewed by the Spirit of Christ, and justified by his merit. It is beyond all dispute and controversy, that the person must first be accepted of God, and reconciled to him in Christ, before the work can be accepted. Abel's person was accepted of God, and then his offering. And hence it is, that *the sacrifices of the wicked* are said to be *an abomination to the Lord.* The very 'ploughing of the wicked is sin.' The matter is this; God is angry with their persons, and he hates and loathes them while out of Christ; and therefore nothing that comes from them, or that is done by them, can be acceptable. And therefore, I say, to make works good and acceptable unto God, they

must be done by a person that is in a gracious and reconciled state.

2. To make a work a good work, it must be *a thing required and called for by the law of God*. The reason of this is plain, because it is God's will that makes any thing sin or duty; and if it be not agreeable to his revealed will, he may say unto us, 'Who hath required this at your hand?' Hence Christ taxeth the Pharisees, saying, 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' And therefore, if you would do any work acceptable to God, you must take care that the thing you do be required and commanded of God. Indeed, there are some actions that are of an indifferent nature; that is, God has left men at a perfect liberty whether to do them or not. But then it should be remembered, that these actions, in the case of offence or edification, cease to be indifferent, and fall under some commandment of the moral law. In which case Paul says, 1 Cor. viii. 13, 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.' It was a thing indifferent whether Paul did eat flesh or not; but when offence was like to follow his eating, he would abstain from it as much as though it were expressly forbidden in the law of God, because in that case it became a breach of the law of love and charity.

3. To make a work a good work, it must be *done from a right principle*. It must be done, first, *from a principle of faith*, as was already hinted; for no work can be acceptable without this, Heb. xi. 6. And there is a twofold faith requisite in a good action. First, a general faith or persuasion that the thing we do may be done lawfully. And of this the apostle speaks, when he says, 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin,' Rom. xiv. 23. And secondly, a particular justifying faith, believing the acceptance of what we do only through the Lord Jesus Christ, and his merit and mediation.

Again, a good work must be done out of *a regard to the authority of God commanding*: and that not simply with a respect unto the authority of a God Creator, for thus a heathen or a Mahometan may obey God and do good

actions; but out of a respect unto the authority of a God in Christ. We must eye the authority of the Creator in our obedience, as coming in this blessed channel, otherwise it is not a true Christian obedience: for we Christians are *under the law to Christ*; and when we are so, we are *not without law to God*, seeing God hath commanded us to *hear his voice*, and to *obey him*, as our *Lord, King, and Lawgiver*. And *whatsoever we do in word or deed*, we are to do *all in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God by him*.

And further, good works must be done *with simplicity and godly sincerity*, avoiding hypocritical and pharisaical ostentation in the discharge of duty; for 'his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him,' Hab. ii. 4.

4. To make a work a good work, *it must be done to a right end*. It must be done to the glory and honour of God, this being the principal and ultimate end of our being, according to that of the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' It must be done as a declaration of our gratitude to God for redeeming love. We are *bought with a price*; therefore we are to 'glorify him in our souls and bodies, which are his.' They must be done also with a view to the edification of others, Matt. v. 16.

II. The second general thing proposed in the method, was to give some account of this believing in God, which is given as the character of those who maintain good works. Here I would do two things. 1. Show what believing in God implies. 2. Show the influence that it hath upon good works.

First, What believing in God imports.

1. It imports *the knowledge of God*, in a suitableness to the revelation which he hath made of himself to us, through Christ, in the gospel. I do own, that the very heathens may know his eternal power by the things that are seen; but there is no saving knowledge of God by a guilty sinner, but as he is in Christ. 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' And whatever fine notions or speculations people may have of God and of his excellencies, as discovered in the works of creation and providence, yet, if their notions of him be not regulated by the gospel revelation, and if this revelation of a God in Christ be not opened by the Spirit of wisdom, rending the veil of ignorance and unbelief that is upon the mind by nature, there can be no saving, satisfying, or sanctifying knowledge of God, and consequently no true faith or believing. Indeed, a rational knowledge may produce a rational faith, and a historical knowledge may produce a historical faith; but it is only a saving illumination of the mind with the knowledge of a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, that can produce a saving faith. And this knowledge is so essential to faith, or believing, that we find it frequently in Scripture called by the name of knowledge: 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.'

2. To believe in God, implies a *firm and steady assent unto the truth and veracity of God speaking in his word*. It is to believe and credit what he says, on his own testimony. This is called a 'receiving the record of God, a setting to the seal that God is true, a believing of the report of the gospel.' When the man hears 'the word of the truth of the gospel,' he is ready to cry out, with the apostle, 'It is a faithful saying.' Now, this assent of the soul to the gospel revelation is not a bare historical assent which leans only to the testimony of man; for thus reprobates may and do believe: but it is such an assent as is bottomed upon the testimony of God, or his record concerning Christ in the gospel. Hence it is called a 'believing the record of God, a setting to the seal that God is true.' Faith that is of a saving nature will not venture upon any thing less than the credit and authority of God himself:—*Thus saith the Lord*, is the ground and reason of the

soul's assent. And this is a firmer bottom than heaven and earth; for 'the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; righteousness being the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.' So that he will as soon cease to be God as cease to make good his word, which is ratified by his oath, these being the 'two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie.'

3. To believe in God is to trust that this word of a reconciled God in Christ is not only true in the general, but that *it shall be true to me in particular*, that it shall be made good to me. He takes up God in Christ as a promising God, promising peace and pardon, grace and glory, in Christ; and he takes up the promise, as coming to him in the offer of the gospel, as the immediate ground and foundation of his faith: Acts ii. 39, 'The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' Now, I say, the man taking up the word of grace and promise in this way, trusts the promiser for the performing thereof to his own soul; he takes it as a sufficient security for all promised good, saying, Here is my 'substance: This is all my salvation.' Hence faith acted upon the promise of God is called the 'substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1. And this is what many notable divines, both abroad and at home, call the assurance of faith, or the appropriating persuasion of faith; because there is not only a persuasion of the truth of the promise, but a persuasion of it with application and appropriation of it to the man himself in particular.

I proceed secondly to inquire what influence this faith hath upon good works. And there are several things that are inlaid with the very nature and exercise of faith, which cannot miss to influence holiness and good works. As,

1. True faith *unites the soul to Christ*, who is the very root and fountain of all holiness. 'From me, saith the Lord, is thy fruit found. Except ye abide in me, and I in you,' to wit, by faith, 'ye cannot bring forth much fruit.'

Indeed, a person in a state of nature may bring forth many fruits that are morally and materially good; but without union with Christ he can do no work that is spiritually good and acceptable. For, 'as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' We may as well 'gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles,' as expect works that are spiritually good from a person out of Christ. Why? The reason of it is plain. His *root* is but *rottenness* while he grows upon the old Adam; and therefore his *blossom shall go up as dust*. While a man is growing upon the old Adam, he is married to the law as a covenant, and therefore all his works are but dead works; and can ever dead works be acceptable to the living God? We must be 'dead to the law by the body of Christ, and *married* unto that better husband before we can bring forth fruit unto God,' Rom. vii. 4.

2. Faith *works by love*; and 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' Love to God in Christ is the next and immediate fruit of true and saving faith. Now, the heart being filled with the love of God in Christ, makes the man to abound in good works: 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' says the apostle. Love makes a man to keep God's commandments. Love will make a man to run through fire and water for him. 'Many waters cannot quench love,' Cant. viii. 7. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Rom. viii. 35.

3. Faith is *a shield to quench the fiery darts of Satan*. When temptation without, and corruption within, are forming a conspiracy against the work of grace in the soul, whereby the whole work is endangered, then faith breaks the plot, and countermines it. When Adonijah's conspiracy had carried the whole strength of the kingdom of Israel, it was broken by making application unto David, 'Hast thou not said that Solomon shall reign?' So, when temptation and corruption have carried the matter to a great height, the conspiracy is broken by faith's application to Christ: O Lord, hast thou not said that grace shall

reign, and that 'sin shall not have dominion over me?' And thus the soul is made to go on its way, 'rejoicing to work righteousness.'

4. Faith *applies the promises of the new covenant*, and fetches grace from thence, for obeying the precept of the law. So that faith, as it were, travels between the precept and the promise: it carries the man from the precept unto the promise, and from the promise to the precept. As for instance, when the law says, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;' faith runs to the promise, where God hath said, 'I will circumcise their hearts to love me.' When the law says, 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and make him thy dread;' faith, in that case, runs to the promise for the grace of fear, 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' Does the law say, *Thou shalt know the Lord*, and acknowledge him for *thy God*? Well, faith looks to the promise, 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord.' Does the law oblige us to *keep all his commandments*? Faith runs to the promise, and applies it, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.'

5. Faith hath influence on good works, as *it beholds the authority of a God in Christ* interposed in every commandment of the law. The eye of natural reason may see, as was hinted, the authority of a God Creator, as is plain in the case of the heathens; but it is only the eye of that faith, which is of God's operation, that can behold the authority of a God in Christ, and receive the law out of his hands. In this respect we are told, 'that no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' And when the law is received from his mouth, it does not reflect dishonour upon God as a Creator. O! when a God in Christ is viewed by faith, the soul cannot but cry out, 'He is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth: His commandments are not grievous: His yoke is easy, and his burden is light:' for I see it no more a covenant

of works to me, but a rule of obedience, sweetened with redeeming love and grace. Thus, you see what influence faith hath upon good works.

III. The third general head proposed in the method, was, to inquire in what respect good works are profitable unto men.

But, first, I would show you negatively, wherein they are not profitable unto men.

1. Then, they are not at all profitable unto men *for justification or acceptance before God*; for 'by the works of the law,' says the apostle, 'shall no flesh be justified.' Our justification and acceptance, both as to our persons and our works, goes upon a quite other ground, namely, upon the everlasting righteousness, the obedience and death of the Son of God, as our Surety apprehended by faith. It is *in him* 'that all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.' Indeed the generality of men, that are trained up in a Protestant country, will tell you, that they do not expect to be justified by their own righteousness, but only by the righteousness of Christ. But alas! how few are they that do really and actually submit unto this righteousness! There is a cursed bias in the heart of man to lean to something in himself. Is not this the language of thy heart many times? O! if I had such a frame, such a melting heart, such love, such a degree of humility and obedience, then I think God would accept of me, and love me on that account. But, Sirs, let me tell you, that it is not on the account of any thing wrought in you, or done by you, that God accepts of you, but only on the account of the doing and dying of the Son of God. I may say to all legalists, that are looking for acceptance with God on the ground of the law, and their own obedience, as the prophet Isaiah says to a set of men in his day, Isa. lix. 6, 'Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works.' So then, good works are not at all profitable to righteousness and justification. Hence is that, Isa. lvii. 12, 'I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, for they shall not profit thee.'

2. Good works are not at all profitable to *found a claim or title unto heaven, or yet to any blessing and mercy promised in the whole covenant of grace*; for heaven, and all the blessings that lie on this side of it, come to us in the way of a free gift. God gives Christ his unspeakable gift, and with him he freely gives us these things: 'The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' I own, indeed, that in God's covenant of promise there is a connexion and order established, for conferring of these promised blessings unto us: so that when God gives one thing, it is a pledge of another thing coming. When for example he gives grace we are sure he will give glory; when he gives a mourning heart, it is a sign that comfort is coming, because that is God's method and way, 'to give the oil of joy for mourning, and to revive the heart of the humble.' But though the tears of gospel mourning be a sign and evidence of comfort coming, yet they are not the condition on which God bestows comfort. So God has connected faith and salvation together in the covenant; so that 'he that believeth shall be saved:' but it is not our faith that entitles us unto salvation; no, but faith unites the soul to Christ, in whom we recover our right to the forfeited inheritance. It is by virtue of the soul's union with Christ by faith, that it is entitled to all the promised blessings. Hence all the promises are said to be 'in him, yea, and in him amen.' There is no promise in the Bible, but it is made in the first instance to Christ as the Head, and in him to the members of his mystical body. Just as it was in the first covenant, to wit, the covenant of works; the promise of life, upon condition of perfect obedience, was made directly to Adam as the covenant-head, and, in him, to his posterity: so in the new covenant, of which Christ is the Head, the promise of life, and every thing belonging to it, is first made to him; and, in him, to all his spiritual seed and offspring: and, in this respect, all the promises are *yea* and *amen* in him. Christ is the first *heir of all things*: and the title of the younger brethren is only through him, or by virtue of their union with him. Thus,

good works, I say, are not profitable unto men, in order to found a title to heaven and eternal life.

3. Our good works, as they are not profitable unto men in any of these respects, so neither *are they profitable unto God, as though he had any advantage by them*: Job xxii. 2, 3, 'Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?' Hence David acknowledgeth, that 'his goodness extended not to the Lord.' Alas! we are ready to think, that God is much indebted unto us, when we do this or not: Have we fasted and prayed, mourned and repented, kept the Sabbath, attended ordinances, and performed this or the other duty; and yet will not God be pleased with all? No, no; do not mistake it, Sirs, you that bring these things as a price in your hands, to recommend you to God, will find that all your duties are but like the *cutting off of a dog's neck*, and the *offering of swine's blood* upon his altar. And therefore he will say to you, as he said to Israel, Isa. i. 11, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me.'

But now, you may perhaps say to me, By this way of speaking you make good works profitable for nothing at all. What strange doctrine is this? I answer, although they be not all profitable in any of these respects, but wholly unprofitable and pernicious; yet good works, when done out of a principle of faith, are really profitable on many other accounts. As,

1. They are profitable, as they *are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith*: Jam. ii. 18, 'Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.' And ver. 22, 'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?' From whence it is plain, that works are profitable, as the fruits and evidences of true faith. We know that there is sap and life in the tree by the fruits, the leaves, and blossoms that it puts forth; so we know our faith to be a true faith,

by the fruits of holiness and good works. Yea, our good works will be brought forth at the last day as the evidence of our faith; and therefore it is said, Rev. xx. 12, 'They were judged according to their works.' Works are not a ground of confidence, but an evidence; they are not the foundation of faith, but the fruits of it; and the believer's comfort may be increased by the sight of good works, though it is not built on them. In a word, they manifest our claim and title to the crown, but do not at all found or merit the same. *We have peace with God* and with conscience by the righteousness of Christ; and by holiness, or good works, our peace of conscience is maintained and evidenced unto us.

2. They are profitable, as they are *testimonies and evidences of our gratitude unto God for the wonders of his grace and love*, manifested in and by Jesus Christ. Hence is that of David, Psal. cxvi. 12, 13, 'What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me! I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.' 1 Pet. ii. 9, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' The works of obedience are, as it were, thank-offerings unto God for the benefits bestowed on us; and when men have not a conversation suitable unto their mercies, they despise the goodness of God. Hence is it that the Lord complains of such, saying, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?'

3. They are profitable and needful *for strengthening our assurance*. 1 John ii. 3, 'Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.' And, ver. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.' 2 Pet. i. 5. to ver. 10. From all which you see that assurance is strengthened and confirmed by the fruits of holiness and good works. We read, that 'the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:' and it is well, when, with the witness of the Spirit, we have that

of water, that is, sanctification and purity of heart and life.

4. They are profitable, as *they are edifying unto others*. Matth. v. 16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' Christ does not there encourage vain-glory and boasting, but proposeth the true end of our visible or external holiness, namely, that others may have matter of praise to God for his grace abounding towards us; and that they may be also engaged to the study of holiness and practical religion by our example. It was a saying of Jerome, 'That he loved Christ dwelling in Augustine.' So ought we to walk, as others may love Christ dwelling in us. It is an exhortation to believing wives, 1 Pet. iii. 1. so to walk, that their husbands may be *won* to the Lord. So that, I say, good works are edifying unto others.

5. They are profitable, as *they serve to adorn the profession of the gospel*: 1 Tim. vi. 1, 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed.' Tit. ii. 5, 9, 10, 11, 12. Thus they serve to adorn religion. The Church is the Lord's garden; and you know the fruitfulness of the trees of the garden serves exceedingly to adorn it; whereas barrenness, or bad fruit, is a disgrace, and makes the garden to be ill spoken of. When men professing godliness have not a walk and conversation suitable, it makes enemies and strangers to conclude that all religion is but a fraud or cheat, and that there is no reality in it; whereas a fruitful conversation stops the mouths of the enemies of religion: 1 Pet. ii. 15, 'So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.'

6. They are profitable, as *they manifest our implantation or ingrafting into Christ*: Eph. ii. 10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'

IV. I proceed now to the last thing in the method, which was the application.

First, This doctrine may serve for information in these two or three particulars.

1. See hence *the right way to attain true morality*, or how you may come to do good works to purpose: you must *believe in God*, and by faith be united to the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle, Rom. vii. tried to do good works by the strength of nature, but it would not do with him; for 'the commandment which was ordained to life, *he found to be unto death.*' And I do verily believe, that none shall ever make a better hand of it than he did, try it who will, by the strength of nature. The law of itself only irritates corruption instead of mortifying it; for, says he, 'when the commandment came, sin revived.' Like a serpent that is chilled with the cold, lies as if it were dead, but when brought to the heat, it revives and spits venom; so corrupt nature, when brought to the commandment, or the commandment brought to it, revives and gathers strength, and discovers more malignity than it did before. 'Sin taking occasion by the commandment, works in us all manner of concupiscence.'

2. See hence, *how unjustly ministers, who endeavour to preach the doctrine of the grace of God*, or who preach down works in the matter of justification, *are aspersed as enemies to good works and holiness*, or as if they separated between faith and good works. This was a calumny cast upon Christ himself, which made him offer that vindication, Matt. v. 17, 'I am not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil the law.' This was a charge against the protomartyr Stephen, Acts vi. 13. that he 'spoke blasphemous words against the holy place, and the law.' And this also was a charge against the apostle Paul and his doctrine; hence it is that he anticipates that objection, Rom. iii. 31, 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.'

3. See hence the *folly of those who, under a pretext of grace, or of faith in Christ, give way unto licentiousness, as many carnal professors do*. Whatever pretences such may have to faith, yet they are strangers unto it, and never

felt the effect of divine grace on their own souls ; otherwise it would 'teach them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.' It is no new thing for corrupt nature to abuse the doctrine of the grace of God. This was an evil the apostle complains of in his day ; hence he takes notice of some who argued that they 'might sin, that grace might abound,' Rom. vi. But though the doctrine of grace may be abused while it lies floating in the head, yet when it gets into the heart it engages to holiness in all manner of conversation. In a word, though the doctrine of grace may be abused, the habit and exercise of grace cannot be abused unto sin.

But I conclude the whole with a few directions or advices. Take these following.

1. If you would do good works, *take care that your state be right*, I mean, take care that ye have a station in Christ the second Adam ; for without this you cannot bring forth fruit, either pleasing to God or profitable to your own souls. Thou art but a thorn and thistle in God's vineyard, while thou art in a state of nature, and therefore there is no good fruit of obedience that can grow upon thee. See that you have the Spirit of Christ within you ; and for this end plead that promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' It is the Spirit of the head that animates all the members of the body ; he helps our infirmities in prayer, and in other good works also.

2. In all your works or duties of obedience, *keep your eye upon the chief corner-stone that God hath laid in Zion*. You know a mason or builder cannot miss to make very irregular work if he do not keep his eye upon the foundation and corner-stone of the house ; his work will be marred. Just so is it here ; if we do not keep our eye on Christ by faith, as the foundation laid in Zion, the foundation of acceptance, the foundation of assistance, we can never yield acceptable obedience unto God. And when either the merit or Spirit of Christ go out of sight, immediately the

heart turns legal, whereby all our duties are spilled and marred.

3. Study always to *keep up the lively impression of this awful truth upon your hearts, that God could find matter of condemnation against you*, not only from your worst sins, but from the best of your duties. The most holy and heavenly man that ever breathed, durst not adventure the salvation of his soul upon the most heavenly thought that ever he conceived. Due impressions of this will help to keep your hearts right in point of righteousness, so as not to build your acceptation before God upon your good works, but only on the works of the Son of God. The apostle, I find, has a notable word to this purpose, 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'I know nothing by myself, yet am not hereby justified.' It is as if he had said, I am not conscious to myself of any unfaithfulness in my ministry, or trust that God has reposed in me; my conscience does not smite me for neglect of duty. Yet all this will not make a righteousness by which I may expect to be justified or accepted of God. No, he accounted all as dung and loss, in the point of justification, that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness. So that you see, even in the presence of your best graces, works, and duties of obedience, free grace through imputed righteousness is to be your only sanctuary and city of refuge.

4. Whenever you are helped to do any thing in obedience to the law, still *remember what you do is done in a borrowed strength*, and that will keep you humble; for it is a vain spirit that is proud of what is borrowed. 1 Cor. iv. 7, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' And therefore do not sacrifice to your own net; for it is not free will, but free grace, to which thou art beholden. 'It is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'

5. Beware of legal ends and motives in the performing of good works.

Quest. What are these? I answer,

1st. It is a legal end in obedience, when a man obeys, or does good works, *to make an atonement for his former sin*. Some folk, when they have fallen into any sin of omission or commission for which their consciences do check and challenge them, will purpose, vow, and resolve that they will do better in time coming, and thereby they think they will make God amends for what injury they have done to him and his holy law. This argues a legal spirit. There is nothing that can atone for the guilt of sin but the ransom and propitiation that God hath found.

2dly. When a man yields obedience *only to still the clamours of an awakened conscience*, or to keep his conscience easy. Alas! Sirs, our own righteousness and good works may well blunt and stop the mouth of conscience, but they will never 'purge the conscience from dead works.' Nothing less can satisfy conscience, God's deputy, than what satisfies divine justice, and that is the blood of Christ applied by faith. And therefore it must needs argue or discover a man to be of a legal spirit that licks himself whole with his good works. Good works are not to be neglected; but they are not to be rested in or upon as a righteousness.

3dly. When a man yields obedience to the commands of the law, *only that he may be kept out of hell*. It is true, indeed, there is a filial fear of God as a Father, and of his fatherly displeasure, which is one of the principal springs of gospel obedience, according to what you have, Jer. xxxii. 40, 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' But there is a vast difference between this and a slavish fear of hell and eternal damnation. There is as great a difference between the one and the other, as between the fear that a loving child has to an affectionate father, and the fear that a condemned malefactor has of his judge: the one is driven to obedience through terror, but the other is drawn to obedience through love. I do not deny but a child of God, through the prevalency of temptation, desertion, or unbelief, may come to be under

such a spirit of bondage ; but then it is not his privilege, but his punishment. And in so far as the child of God is actuated in his obedience by a *spirit of bondage unto fear*, his obedience is legal ; for when he acts like himself, like a believer, indeed, he ‘serves the Lord without fear,’ without slavish fear of hell and wrath, ‘in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of his life,’ Luke i. 74, 75.

4thly. When a man performs good works, *to procure a right and title to heaven and glory*. For, as I was saying, our title comes only by Jesus Christ ; Christ is the first heir of eternal life, and we are *joint heirs with him*. But ye may say, Are we not told, Rev. xxii. 14, ‘Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.’ For clearing this to you, know that there is a two-fold right to glory, which is the thing there spoken of, to wit, a legal and evidential right. (1.) I say there is a legal or a law right. You know the title to life and glory was forfeited by the breach of the law in the first Adam, and it must be recovered again by a perfect obedience unto the law ; and whose obedience can do this but the obedience of Christ imputed to us for righteousness ? So that, I say, we come to have our law right and title to glory, and other blessings only recovered in Christ, and by the imputation of his righteousness to us, whereby ‘the law is magnified, and made honourable.’ But, (2.) There is a right of evidence, whereby our right through Christ is evidenced and cleared up to our own souls. And this is the right that I conceive is spoken of in the scripture last mentioned. ‘They that do his commandments,’ and yield obedience out of gospel principles and motives, give evidence of their *right*, through Christ, to heaven and glory ; and they shall ‘enter in through the gates into the city of the new Jerusalem.’ But to make our own obedience, our own holiness or good works, the ground and foundation of our claim to the glories of heaven, is grossly legal and popish. Thus, I say, study to beware of doing good works out of legal motives

and principles; for these are like the dead fly, that makes the apothecary's ointment to stink.

6. My last advice is, *Study to yield obedience from gospel principles, ends, and motives.* I shall not enlarge upon these, because they were hinted at already. Obey and do good works, with an eye to the glory of God, out of a principle of gratitude unto him that has bought you with his blood. And yield obedience, that in this way ye may maintain fellowship and communion with God. It is the man 'that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place.' The duties of obedience are like waggons or chariots, which bring the soul to Christ and the embraces of his love, though they be not the procuring or meritorious cause of the least blink of the Lord's countenance. And then, to conclude, study the duties of obedience, not that ye may obtain a title to heaven, which is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchase, but that ye may attain an aptitude and 'meetness for partaking of the inheritance of the saints in light;' for though there be no connexion of merit, yet there is a connexion of congruity and suitableness between begun holiness here and consummated holiness hereafter. It is among the irreversible decrees of heaven, that unholy, unsanctified sinners, continuing so, shall never enter into the kingdom of God. No unclean thing shall ever enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. And therefore, beware of thinking, that when we lead you to Christ, as the only foundation of your title to eternal life, thereby we encourage any in a way of sin or unholiness. No; the grace of God in this gospel teacheth us better things, namely, to 'deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.'

SERMON IX.

THE LAW OF FAITH ISSUING FORTH FROM MOUNT ZION.

For the law shall go out of Zion.—Isa. ii. 3.

FROM the beginning of this chapter and downwards, we have a prophecy concerning the glorious kingdom of grace, to be erected by the Messiah, under the New Testament dispensation. Where two or three things may be noticed. (1.) By what name the prophet speaks of the New Testament church; he calls it ‘the mountain of the Lord’s house.’ Under the Old Testament, the mountain of the house of the Lord was restricted to Jerusalem; the church of God was mostly pent up within the narrow boundaries of Jerusalem and Judea; but under the New Testament, the mountain of the Lord’s house is to be found, wherever God is worshipped, the gospel preached, and the mystery of salvation through a Redeemer opened. (2.) We have an account of the ingathering of the Gentile nations, into the bosom of the church under the New Testament; ‘all nations shall flow unto it.’ The kingdom of Christ shall no longer be confined to the nation of the Jews, the natural posterity of Abraham; no, the partition wall shall be broken down, and ‘from the uttermost part of the earth songs shall be heard, even glory to the righteous.’ (3.) We have the encouragement which the New Testament converts give to their friends and neighbours to come along with them, and partake of the blessings of Christianity, and share of the advantages of the Messiah’s administra-

tion. 'Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob,' &c. They that know Christ, and who have obtained grace and salvation through him, are desirous that others should share with them; saying with the woman of Samaria to her fellow-citizens, 'Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?' They would have all the world the better of him, could they get their desire. Then follows an account of the great mean or instrument whereby all this should be effected, how the kingdom of Christ under the New Testament should be erected, *The law shall go out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* The last part of the verse is exegetic or explicatory of the first, the word of the Lord that goes out of Jerusalem being the same thing with the law that goeth out of Zion; and it is this I am to insist upon at present. Where notice,

1. The designation given to the gospel; it is expressed here under the notion of a *law*. It is generally agreed among all orthodox interpreters, that by the *law* here is to be understood the gospel. And it is not without good reason that they make this to be the meaning; for it is not a law coming out of Sinai, but out of Zion; it is a law which is the great instrument of gathering the nations into the bosom of the church: *All nations shall flow unto it, for the law shall go out of Zion.* And this is not effected by the law of commandments, but by the gospel only.

2. In the words we may notice the royal seat from whence this law is issued: it cometh forth from *Zion*. *Zion* was the usual name whereby the Old Testament church was called: 'The Lord hath chosen *Zion*: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Out of *Zion*, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.' And then the church was called *Zion*, from the mount upon which the tabernacle was erected: thither the tribes of Israel went up to worship the God of Israel who dwelt between the cherubim. And we find this name of *Zion* transferred from

the Old to the New Testament church, Heb. xii. 22. 'Ye are come unto mount Zion, the city of the living God.'

3. We have the egress of this law from Zion; it *goeth forth*, like a proclamation issued out by royal authority unto the subjects, that none may pretend ignorance; it goeth forth like the waters of the sanctuary, which issued out from under the threshold of the temple, and did run into the desert of the Gentile nations, making every thing to live whither it cometh.

OBSERV. That the gospel, which is the law of sovereign grace, is issued out from Zion, or published for the behoof of lost sinners, who are sinking under the curse and condemnation of the law of works. *The law shall go out of Zion.*

In discoursing from this text and doctrine, I shall endeavour to observe the order and method following.

I. I shall offer some general thoughts respecting the gospel, here called by the name of a law.

II. Give the reasons of this designation, or show why the gospel is called a law.

III. Inquire into the differences between the law coming out of Zion, and the law coming out of Sinai.

IV. Wind up all in some practical improvement of the whole.

I. The first thing is, to give some account of the gospel, here called a law coming out of Zion. All I shall say about it at present is only to tell you,

1. That the word *gospel* properly signifies *any good speech*, or joyful message: and fitly is it applied unto the gospel, because it brings the most joyful message unto lost sinners that ever was heard. *Behold*, said the angels unto the shepherds, 'we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' On the same account also it is called 'the joyful sound,' Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16, 'Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:

and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.' The gospel brings a sound of liberty to captives, of pardon to condemned criminals, of peace to rebels, a sound of life to the dead, and salvation to them that lie on the borders of hell and condemnation.

2. I would remark, that the gospel strictly taken is *a word of promise*. The first gospel that ever was preached to our first parents, when a dismal cloud of wrath was hanging over their heads in Paradise after the fall, was in a promise. Gen. iii. 15, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.' The gospel preached unto Abraham, what was it but a promise of Christ? 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,' Gal. iii. 8. And I think it observable, that the same thing which the apostle calls the *gospel*, ver. 8, he calls the *promise*, and the *covenant*, ver. 17, 18, 19. So that the gospel strictly taken is a word of promise. Thus in Heb. iv. 1, 2, what the apostle calls 'a promise of entering into God's rest' in the 1st verse, he calls the *gospel* in the 2d verse. And a God of love and grace dispenses his grace in a promise, for our encouragement to take hold of it in a way of believing; for there is nothing wherein the faithfulness of God is so much engaged as in a promise, the very design of which is to be believed.

3. We are carefully to distinguish between *the gospel*, and the *dispensation of the gospel*. For although the gospel strictly taken be a word of promise, yet there are many other things that belong to the gospel dispensation. For instance, the whole law of God, considered both as a covenant and as a rule, falls in under the dispensation of the gospel. The law as a covenant is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, by convincing us of sin and misery; the law as a rule comes in to show us what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, not for justification, but in point of love and gratitude, even 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.' And every man that really by faith closes with the promise, or law of grace, will infallibly approve of the law of commandments,

as *holy, just, and good*: and thus it is for a light to his feet, and a lamp to his paths. All gospel institutions, such as the word, sacraments, and prayer, and other means of God's appointment, belong to the dispensation of the gospel, being as so many golden pipes, by which the golden oil of the grace of God in the promise is conveyed to the city of God. All the histories, prophecies, and types of the word, what are they but an opening and explication of the promise? Every thing in the word, from the beginning to the end of it, is, some way or other, subservient to the exhibition or application of the promise unto us.

4. Since the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the erection of a New Testament church, *the gospel is much more clearly preached* than it was under the old dispensation. Under the Old Testament, the glorious mysteries of redeeming love lay under a vail of dark prophecies, types, ceremonies, and the like: but now 'life and immortality is brought to light.' The mystery which was hid from ages and generations is made manifest unto the saints. The fountains of the great depth of the love, wisdom, and knowledge of God in Christ, are broken up, and set forth in the purest light. Thus much for the first thing, which was, to give you a general view of the gospel.

II. The second thing was, to inquire why the gospel is called a law. 'The law shall go out of Zion.'

1. Then, the gospel may be called a *law, by way of accommodation*, or condescension unto the weakness of the Jewish nation, who had the word *law* in such veneration, that they could receive no doctrine but what went under that name and notion. And this is a reason given by some excellent interpreters, why the apostle Paul calls the gospel *the law of faith*, Rom. iii. 27. He became all things to all men, that he might gain some; and so here he speaks to the Jews in their own dialect, when he calls the gospel *the law of faith*. As if he had said, You will needs be justified by the law; yet you cannot be justified by the law of works; but here is a law by which ye may be justified, even by the law of faith, 'the gospel of the grace of God.' We find

Christ accommodating himself much after the same manner unto the Jews, John vi. 28. There a company of legalists came to Christ, who had no other notion of the way to salvation but by working or doing, and they say to him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Christ answers them in their own dialect, ver. 29, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' Working and believing stand opposite to one another in the business of a sinner's salvation, as you see, Rom. iv. 5.; and yet Christ, to accommodate himself to these Jews, calls faith a *work*, though it excludes itself and all works besides in the business of salvation. So here the apostle calls the gospel a *law*, in condescension to the Jews, though, as you heard, it is a law that requires no works to be done by us; for it is not the law of *works* but the law of *faith*.

2. The gospel may be called a *law*, because it *is the will of a Sovereign*, intimated to those who depend on him for their being and well-being, and who lie entirely at his mercy. A law must bear the stamp of sovereign authority on it; and in this sense the gospel is fitly called a *law*, because it carries the stamp of the authority of heaven. Not only the law of commandments, but the law of faith, or the gospel, is issued forth with a *Thus saith the Lord*. And if the gospel be not received and believed upon this ground, namely, that of the divine testimony, the faith is not of the right stamp; for the language of faith is, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*. It receiveth the whole will of God, and that not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of the living God.

3. The gospel may be called a *law*, because of *its obligation* both upon God and man. It has a mighty force to bind and oblige all concerned. What more binding to God than his own promise? It is to him as the laws of the Medes and Persians, which he will not come and go upon. No, his promise (which is the law of faith) is not *yea and nay*, but is always *yea and amen*. And this is the great comfort of believers, that he will not go back with his word;

no, 'the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent.' And then, as this law of faith is binding upon God the Lawgiver, so it is binding upon us, to whom it is given. For though it enjoins no duty perceptively, yet it requires faith objectively considered; that is, it is the object of faith, and the matter of faith, and the fuel of faith, and it requires or commands faith in us, just as meat and drink require a hungry and thirsty man to eat and drink, when they are set before him. What can be a better invitation to eat than to have meat set before us, with a hearty welcome to the guests? So that, what can be a stronger obligation upon us to believe, than to have Christ and his whole fullness set before us, in a full, free, unhampered call, offer, and promise.

4. The gospel is called a *law*, because of the *public intimation of it* to a lost world. You know laws of sovereigns are commonly proclaimed by heralds from the market-cross with sound of trumpet, that none may pretend ignorance. So the gospel is published by heralds, I mean ministers of the gospel, who are ordered to proclaim it from the tops of the high places, and in the entry of the gates, and places of public concourse. Yea, our commission bears us to intimate it to men, and the sons of men, to preach this gospel to every creature, that none may perish through ignorance of the way of salvation.

5. The gospel is fitly called a *law*, because it is the *measure and standard of faith*; and therefore fitly called by the apostle in the place just now cited, Rom. iii. 27, *the law of faith*. The whole of our religion is comprised in two things, expressed in the third question of our Lesser Catechism, namely, what we are to believe, and what we are to do. As for the last, viz., What duty God requires of man, it is summarily comprehended in the law of the ten commandments, that is the standard and measure of duty; and there is nothing sin but what the law forbids, and nothing duty but what the law requires. But as for what we are to believe concerning God, unto the salvation of our souls, the gospel only is the standard of that. Our faith is to be

bounded by the gospel, as our practice is by the law; so that we are not to receive for doctrine the dictates or notions of men. True faith will receive nothing, it will believe nothing but just what God says in the gospel; it will take and entertain every word of God and no more; it is the measure of faith, and the true boundary of faith; and therefore fitly called *the law of faith*,

6. The gospel may be called *the law of faith*, because of *the invincible power and force* that it lays a sinner under to receive and believe it, when accompanied with the energy of the Spirit. I remember that this same apostle frequently calls indwelling sin a *law*, Rom. vii. 23, 'I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.' And Rom. viii. 2, 'The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' Sin is called a *law*, because of the power that it hath over the man to lead him captive to his service. So, for the same reason, the gospel may be called *the law of faith*, because, when accompanied with the efficacy of the Spirit, 'it is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.' It is 'mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ, and brings every thought into captivity to his obedience.' O that the gospel may be indeed the law of faith unto many in this respect, that it may be the power of God to the salvation of their souls.

7. I think it may be called a *law*, in respect of *the royal throne* from which it issues forth. The law of commandments comes from God's throne absolutely considered; but the law of faith goes out from the throne of God and the Lamb, that is, from a throne of grace. Hence we read of the 'pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb;' which may be understood of the doctrine of the gospel, which is frequently in scripture compared to water. It is from this throne that all the laws of grace in the gospel are emitted. And then,

8. Because the promise, which is the soul of the gospel,

runs in the *style of adorable sovereignty*, even of sovereign grace, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,' &c. And when this law of grace is received by faith, the soul just says, O Lord, thy will be done, and it shall be done, because it is thy will.

III. The third thing in the method was, to inquire into the difference and agreement between the law coming out of Zion, and the law coming out of Sinai; or, in other words, between the law and the gospel. And first, with regard to the difference between them, I remark,

1. Then, the law of commandments coming out of Sinai is a thing known (though not in its uttermost latitude and extent) *by the light of nature*; as is clear, Rom. ii. 14, 15, where the apostle tells us, that 'the Gentiles which had not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts.' The writings of Seneca, Plato, Confucius, and other heathen moralists, are incontestable evidences of the truth of this. But now the gospel, or the law of grace, which cometh out of Zion, is a thing *only known by supernatural revelation* from on high. Search all the volumes of the heathen philosophers from one end to the other, you shall never find in them the least hint of an incarnate Deity, or of the glorious mystery of salvation through a crucified Christ. Indeed, they discovered God as a creating God, and as a governing God, as a commanding and threatening God; but they never discovered him as a promising God in Christ; no, no, this is only owing to the discovery that God has made of himself in the gospel. Yea, the mystery of salvation through Christ is so much out of the ken of natural reason, that even after it is revealed externally in the dispensation of the word, yet such is the ignorance and depravation of nature, and the strong bent that it hath toward the law, that it cannot know, and cannot receive it, till a beam of supernatural light shine into the heart. Hence Christ tells his disciples, 'Unto you it is given to know the

mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to others it is not given.' The light of natural reason is so far from receiving the gospel revelation, that it spurns at it, and opposes it with might and main: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' said the Jews to Christ. The gospel preached by Paul, was 'a stumbling-block to the Jews, foolishness and vain babbling to the Greeks and wise Athenians,' hence comes the difficulty of believing in Christ to the saving of the soul.

2. The office of the law of works coming out of Sinai is *to discover sin and guilt*. 'It was added because of transgressions,' says the apostle. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin, and sin by the commandment appears to be exceeding sinful;' and at the bar of the law, 'the whole world is found guilty before God: no flesh living can be justified,' if God deal with us according to the terms and tenor of the law. But now the office and province of the gospel coming out of Zion is *to discover Christ, as 'the Lord our righteousness, and the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'* The gospel tells us, that 'Christ has finished transgression, and made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness; that he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' The gospel shows how the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, namely, by God's imputation and faith's acceptance of the righteousness of God revealed for this end in the gospel.

3. The law of works is *a cursing and condemning word to the guilty sinner*, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' It cries 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth.' Nothing but clouds of wrath and vengeance are to be seen by a guilty sinner when he looks toward Sinai; 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish unto every soul of man that doth evil.' But now the gospel is *a word of blessing*, it presents Christ the blessed seed of Abraham, and cries, 'Men shall be blessed in him, and all generations shall call him blessed.' The law is a word

of wrath, but the gospel comes with the olive branch of peace; the law displays the red flag of war, but the gospel casts out the white flag of reconciliation, saying, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,' sending out a word of reconciliation. And, 'O how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!'

4. The law coming out of Sinai *is a slaying and killing word* to the sinner. Paul had the experience of this at his first conversion; it was a keen arrow dipped in law vengeance, that struck him to the ground in his way going to Damascus, and made him cry, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Hence it is that he thus expresses himself, Rom. vii. 9, 10, 'I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.' But now the gospel, or the law coming out of Zion, *is a word of life*. The first sound of the gospel, when it reaches the heart, is like life from the dead to the poor soul that was lying in the regions and shadow of death. By it we are 'begotten unto a lively hope of eternal life, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.' It is with a view to the preaching and publication of the gospel in the power of it that Christ says, John v. 25, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live:' hence the gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation,' it contains 'the words of eternal life.' 'Go (says the Lord to the apostles, when he is dismissing them from the prison into which they were shut up by the persecuting Jews) Go, stand and preach in the temple to the people, all the words of this life;' that is, go preach the gospel, publish my law of grace unto lost sinners, in spite of all the malice and power of your enemies, Acts v. 20.

5. The law of works coming out of Sinai, *is a word of bondage*; but the gospel coming forth from Zion, *is a word of freedom and liberty*. This the apostle illustrates at great length, Gal. iv. from ver. 22. and downward, where he

compares those who are under the law unto Hagar and Ishmael her son; those who are of the gospel, or children of the promise, unto Sarah and her son Isaac, ver. 24, 'Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants, the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.' And, ver. 25, 26, 'This Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.' And, ver. 28, 'Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.' And, ver. 30, 'Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.' From all which, it appears, that the law is a word of bondage, and they that cleave unto it are in bondage to sin, to Satan, to the curse and wrath of God. But the gospel is a word of liberty, and they who do by faith receive and entertain the joyful sound of it, are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free, being freed from the law as a covenant, freed from its curse, from the dominion of sin, and the power of Satan, and advanced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is very remarkable, that Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, is cast out of the family, even after he had done many things in obedience to his father Abraham. All the services he had done in the family would not give him a title to the inheritance. No, notwithstanding of all he had done, he is disinherited. Just so is it with the legalist who keeps and obeys the law in a servile way, with a view to entitle himself to the inheritance, or to deliver himself from hell and wrath by his obedience; all his service stands for nothing, at last he is cast out with the son of the bond-woman. But as Isaac, being a child of promise, was, by virtue of the promise, entitled unto Abraham's estate, before ever he was capable to do his father any service; just so is it with believers, they renounce all claim to the inheritance of eternal life by the law, or the works of it, and serve themselves heirs to the inheritance by virtue of the *pro-*

mise, which is *yea and amen in Christ*. Thus, I say, the law gendereth to bondage, but the gospel unto liberty and freedom.

6. Whatever the law gives to any of Adam's race, *it gives in a way of debt*, whether it be life or death. If a man keeps the law perfectly, he shall have life as his reward, and as a debt due to him in a pactional way. If he break the law, he shall have death, as a debt due for his rebellion against heaven. Hence 'the wages of sin is death:' Rom. iv. 4, 'To him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.' But now whatever the gospel, or the law coming out of Zion, gives to any, it gives in *a way of grace or free gift*; hence we are told, that 'the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord;' and this is asserted upon the record of a Trinity, 'that he hath given unto us (*viz.*, of his own sovereign grace) eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' It is 'not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy that he saves us.' By the law of works justice reigns either unto eternal life, or to eternal death, as the law is kept or broken; but by the law of faith, or the gospel, 'grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.'

7. The law of works is calculated for *the justification of a righteous man*, like Adam in a state of perfect integrity, and it speaks peace to none but such: but the gospel, or law, coming out of Zion, is calculated for *the justification of the fallen, ruined, and bankrupt sinner*. It shows a way how God doth justify the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5, 'To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.' None but they who own themselves ungodly and unrighteous, can enjoy the privilege of justification by the gospel; for 'Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

8. The law of works, through the depravation of nature, *irritates and strengthens corruption*: Rom. vii. 5, 'The motions of sins which are by the law, work in our members to bring fruit unto death.' And, ver. 8, 'Sin taking occa-

sion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.' And, ver. 11, 'Sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.' From which it appears, that the law, considered abstractly, instead of being the death of sin, is the strength of it. Whenever the commandment of the law is broken, the curse takes place, of which this is a particular branch, that such a man shall be given up to the power of sin, that he may be capable to do nothing but sin, and sin on till he has ripened himself for hell and wrath. 'My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels.' It is the voice of the law, and the most terrible voice that it utters on this side of hell, Such a man is 'joined to his idols, let him alone; he builds altars to sin, and altars shall be unto him to sin.' Thus the law of works, instead of weakening sin in the soul, gives up the sinner to the power of sin, that he may go on without any restraint, till the final sentence of the law be executed with a vengeance. And then corrupt nature is so impetuous, that the more it is hemmed in by the law, the more doth it swell and rage, till it has broken down and broken through all the boundaries the law set against it. Thus, I say, the law of works, abstractly considered, through the depravation of nature, irritates and fortifies corruption. But now the gospel, or law coming out of Zion, enters into the heart, and, through the power of the eternal Spirit, *wastes, weakens, and kills it* in the very source and fountain; for 'we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.' And how do we receive the Spirit? 'Not by the works of the law but by the hearing of faith.' I own, indeed, that the law which urges obedience and doing, may have so much influence upon those who are under it, as to smooth and polish their outward conversation; but yet it leaves the heart and will obstinate against its spiritual commands. The iron sinew is never bowed by any power that the law hath; corruption keeps the throne in the heart, but gospel grace enters the strongholds of

iniquity, casts down the high imaginations that advance themselves against the knowledge of Christ, and brings every thought unto his obedience. Moses, we read, entered the border and outskirts of Canaan, such as the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, but never pierced into the heart of the country to subdue the Canaanites. This was left for Joshua, a type of our JESUS. Just so is it here, the most the law can do to them that are under it, is only to restrain sin in the conversation, to reform the life. It may bring a man to serve in the oldness of the letter, while sin still keeps the throne in the heart. Hence either pride or hypocrisy, or raging despair, remains with the legalist; it is only the gospel, or the law coming out of Zion, that is 'the power of God unto salvation.'

9. The law of works coming out of Sinai is *a word of precept, or a commanding word*; but the law coming out of Zion is *a promising word*. By the gospel God shows what he is to do for us and to us of his sovereign grace; by the law he shows what we are to do for him in point of duty, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' By the gospel God shows what we may expect from him; and by the law he shows what he expects from us, in a way of duty and gratitude. The gospel is the boundary of faith or things to be believed; the law is the boundary of practice, or things to be done by us. In a word, all precepts whatsoever belong to the law; but all promises, offers, and revelations of grace, belong to the gospel.

10. The law of works enjoins duty, but *gives no strength to discharge it*; the law does not furnish the bankrupt with any new stock wherewith to fall a-trading, but supposes us to have the stock and strength that God gave us at our creation. It abates nothing, remits nothing of its demands upon the account of our weakness, but requires as much service of the sick and weak sinner as if he were sound and strong; it admits of no composition or allowance to the

insolvent debtor. But now the law coming out of Zion considers the sinner as bankrupt; and therefore *presents him with an everlasting righteousness*, wherewith to answer the law as a covenant. It considers him as wholly impotent for any duty, and therefore leads him out of himself to Christ, as the 'strength of the poor and needy; it gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might.' It teaches the soul to say, Though I be not sufficient to think a good thought, or to do any duty of the law, yet 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.' The gospel law coming out of Zion considers the man as poor, and therefore presents him with 'gold tried in the fire to enrich him;' it considers him as naked, and therefore presents him with *white raiment*; as blind, and provides him with *eye-salve, that he may see*; it considers him as starving for want, and therefore invites him to 'eat that which is good, and to delight himself in the abundance of fatness;' as bewildered, and therefore shows him 'the new and living way' to glory, crying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' Thus I have showed some of the principal differences between the law and the gospel.

I shall conclude the doctrinal part of this discourse, by pointing out, in a few words, the harmony and agreement between them; for although there be all these differences between the law and the gospel, yet there is no feud between them. They sweetly stand together in their proper place; the law is not against the gospel, nor the gospel against the law; no, there is a pleasant harmony, which will appear, if we consider, First, that *by the gospel the law reaches its end*, 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' In the gospel we see the law fulfilled as a covenant, and settled as a rule of obedience. I say, it is fulfilled as a covenant by the righteousness revealed in the gospel; yea, not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable, a new and superadded glory reflected upon it by Christ, the Son of God, being 'made under the law, to redeem us who were under the law.' And then by the gospel it is also settled as a rule of obedience, Rom.

iii. 31, 'Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.' The gospel brings to light new motives and arguments to obedience, which the law itself, abstractly considered, could never afford, namely, arguments drawn from the consideration of redeeming grace and love, which have a more constraining power to obedience with an ingenuous spirit, than all the curses and penalties that the law denounces against those who do not continue in obedience thereto.

Second, the harmony of the law and gospel appears in this, that *the law paves the way to the entertainment of gospel grace*: for it is 'a schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith.' The law is a lance in the hand of the surgeon to open the ulcer of sin and corruption within us; the gospel as a medicinal balsam drains and gradually heals it, when applied in the way of believing. The law is a plough to till up the fallow ground of the heart of man; the gospel is the good seed cast into the furrows, which being impregnated by the dew of heaven, makes it spring up to everlasting life. The law is as a hammer to break the rock in pieces; the gospel dissolves it with the warm fire of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Thus the law is subservient to the great design of the gospel.

Third, what *the law teaches preceptively*, the gospel teaches *effectively*; the law enjoins the duty, the gospel furnishes with grace to obey it; there is no duty the law requires, but there is suitable furniture in the gospel-promise to discharge it. Doth the law require us to *know the Lord*, which is the first precept in the moral law? Well, here is suitable grace provided in the gospel, 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord.' Doth the law require us to 'trust in him at all times?' Well, the gospel promise is suited unto this, 'They shall trust in the name of the Lord,' Zeph. iii. 12. Doth it require of us to 'love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind?' Here is gospel grace to effect it, 'I will circumcise their hearts to love the Lord their God.' Doth it crave obedience, say-

ing, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect?' Well, the grace of the gospel says, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.' Doth the law enjoin us to 'sanctify the Lord in our hearts, and make him our fear and our dread?' The grace of the promise exactly suits that, 'I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.' Doth the law require us to 'call on the name of the Lord, to worship and serve him?' The gospel promises that 'the spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured out, to help our infirmities, and to teach us to pray, and praise,' and perform other acts of worship. Does the law enjoin us to repent and turn from the evil of our ways? the gospel promises the *heart of flesh* in place of the *heart of stone*; and tells us, that 'God sent his Son to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities.' Thus you see that what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively.

Fourth, I might tell you, that the harmony between the law and the gospel appears in this, that the law *discovers the sinner's duty*, and the gospel *discovers the object of duty*. The law enjoins faith, the gospel lifts up Christ the object of faith. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of man lifted up,' viz., upon the gospel pole; 'that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.' The law enjoins the sinner to love God with all the heart; but it is the gospel only that presents God in such a view, as to become an object of love to a guilty sinner, namely, as he is a reconciled God and Father in Christ; for viewing God absolutely, as he is presented in the glass of the holy law, he is an object of terror instead of love. The law enjoins us to turn from sin under the pain of eternal wrath and vengeance; the gospel shows the sinner a refuge unto which he is to turn, 'Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.' The law enjoins mourning for sin, 'Rend your hearts and not your garments;' the gospel presents a crucified Christ, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,

whom when the sinner views by faith, he 'mourns, as one doth for an only son, and is in bitterness, as one is in bitterness for a first-born.' The law requires us to worship the Lord our God; the gospel discovers both the object and the way of worship; I say, the gospel discovers the object of worship, namely, a God in Christ, and the way to the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus.

To conclude, the law by *its terror sweeps away the refuge of lies*; the gospel *discovers a new foundation of hope and help*, saying, 'Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.' The law saps the foundation of sand, and overturns the tower that the sinner was building in order to reach heaven by it; the gospel discovers the rock of ages upon which the sinner may build his house, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. The law, when viewed spiritually, drives the sinner out of himself, by discovering his emptiness, poverty, and misery; the gospel draws and invites him out of himself, by discovering the all-fulness of a Redeemer to supply his wants, though never so great. The law lets the man see that he has no money nor price; the gospel shows, that though he has no money nor price, yet he may come and buy gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eye-salve. The law lets the sinner see that he is shut up in a pit, wherein there is no water; the gospel shows how the sinner, by the blood of God's covenant, may come forth out of the pit, and opens a fountain of living water, where he may draw and drink with joy. The law leads us to Christ for righteousness; the gospel sends us to the law as a rule of obedience, as a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths. Thus the whole life and work of a Christian is a continual traffic from the law to the gospel, and from the gospel, back again to the law as a rule. So much then shall serve for clearing the harmony and agreement betwixt the law and the gospel.

IV. The fourth and last thing proposed, was the appli-

cation of the whole. And the first use shall be by *way of caution*, to prevent the abuse of this doctrine.

Although, as ye have heard, there be such a law of grace issued out of Zion for the salvation of lost sinners; yet let none from this conclude, or infer, that the law of commandments coming out of Sinai is to be laid aside as a thing useless under the dispensation of the gospel. There are two extremes corrupt nature is ready to carry people into, who hear the word preached; they are ready either to turn in to the Antichristian or Antinomian camp. I say, some are ready to turn in to the Antichristian camp, by setting up the law, and the works thereof, in the room of Christ and his everlasting righteousness; and this is the extreme that all legalists run into, whose hearts are not sufficiently loosed from the law as a covenant. But then there are others, who having some notional knowledge of the doctrine of grace, of the law coming out of Zion, in their heads, and being strangers to any heart acquaintance therewith, begin to imagine, that the moral law, or the law of commandments, is an useless thing under the gospel, and that it is a matter of indifferency whether they obey it or not; and thus turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness. I have had occasion already to guard you against the first of these extremes; at present I would offer something to keep you from the Antinomian extreme of casting away the law coming out of Sinai as a thing useless and unprofitable under the gospel. And this I shall endeavour to do, by telling you of several excellent uses that the law serves for even under the gospel. I shall not enlarge upon them, some of them having been just now touched upon, in clearing the differences and harmony between the law and the gospel. Know then, that divines tell us of two main ends for which the law was promulgated from mount Sinai, the one political, the other theological.

1. There was a *political* use of it, which the apostle seems to point at, 1 Tim. i. 8, 9, 'We know that the law

is good if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, &c., that is, it was made for them, if not for their rule that it should be their punishment.

2. The second use of it is *theological* or divine. This theological or divine use and end of the law is twofold. 1st. In those who are not yet justified. 2dly. In those who are justified.

1st. I say, There is a use of it in those who are *to be justified*, but are not yet in a state of justification. And the use of it with respect to them is to discover sin, or humble them for it, that so they through the law may die to the law, as a covenant, and so betake themselves to Christ, who is 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'

2dly. In those that *are justified* the holy law serves, (1.) As a rule of obedience to direct to what is duty. (2.) As a glass to discover the holiness of God, and the imperfection of our obedience, that so we may see a constant use for Christ, both for righteousness and sanctification. (3.) It serves as a bridle to restrain and hem in remaining corruption, as a rod to chastise and correct for sin, 2 Tim. iii. 16. The Lord makes use of it as a whip to lash his own children with inward terrors, when he sees it needful for them; hence we find them sometimes complaining that *the arrows of the Almighty are within them, viz., the arrows of legal terrors drinking up their spirits, and setting themselves in array against them.* This is something of 'the spirit of bondage unto fear,' which yet believers do not receive in a way of vindictive anger, as the wicked do, but in a way of fatherly correction. This much then by a way of caution, to prevent Antinomianism, either in principle or practice. Beware then of casting away the law coming out of Sinai as an useless thing; if you do it, it is an evidence that you never yet truly received the grace of the gospel. It is among the acts or laws of grace coming out

of Zion, that 'God will write his law upon the hearts of his people, and put it into their inward parts;' so as they are made to 'delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man.' It is, and will be the study of the true Israel of God, to walk according to this rule; and David's prayer will be often in their hearts and mouths, Psal. cxix. 80, 'Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed:' and ver. 5, 'O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' And if there be any, who under pretence of gospel grace, do discard the law of commandments, I shall only refer them to that awful word of God, Psal. l. 16, 17, 'Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thy back.' Do not then pretend to be saved by God's covenant, while you disregard his commandments.

Use second of this doctrine may be of *information* only in two or three things. Is it so that the gospel or law of grace is issued out of Zion, for the benefit of sinners lost and condemned by the law of works? then,

1. See hence how *agreeable it is unto the revealed will of God* that a sinner believe in Christ. Why, in believing, we both answer the authority of God enjoining faith in the law of commandments, and God's great design in the gospel or law of grace, which is to bring Christ and his grace near to sinners, that they may receive him by faith: John xx. 31, 'These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.'

2. See *the horrid evil of the sin of unbelief, which tramples both law and gospel under foot*. It contemns the authority of God interposed in the law of commandments; for 'this is his command, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' And it despises the riches of his grace manifested in the gospel or law of grace, it calls God a *liar*, and in effect says, not a word or promise that ever he uttered is to be trusted: remember that awful word, Heb. x. 28, 29. Indeed unbe-

lief is of a more criminal nature, in God's reckoning, than any other sin that can be named or thought upon. The sin of Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit, was a most aggravated crime. For a creature newly dropt out of his Creator's fingers, a creature dignified with the lively image of God upon him, exalted unto sovereignty over this lower world, having all things put under his feet: I say, for such a creature, upon a slender temptation, to turn his back on God, and cast himself into the devil's arms, to ruin himself and the whole tribe of mankind at one blow; this, no doubt, was a most crying sin. But yet the sin of unbelief far surpasses it: for our first parents sinned only against God as a Creator; but the unbeliever sins against him as a Redeemer, consequently he sins against more love than they could sin against, before the revelation of Christ. Again, unbelief is more criminal than the sin of the Jews in crucifying of the Lord of glory; they crucified him when veiled and disguised under the form of a servant; but the unbeliever crucifies him upon his throne, when the evidences of his being the true Messiah are completed by his resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4. It would be a crime of a far more capital nature, to maltreat a king sitting on the throne, with all his nobles about him, than to maltreat him when under a disguise, sitting upon the dunghill with a company of beggars about him: yet the former is the case with the unbeliever. Again, unbelief is worse than the sin of Sodom, which provoked God to rain hell out of heaven upon its inhabitants. Christ tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah will have a cold hell in comparison of those who have had the offers of a Saviour in the gospel, and yet have rejected him. Matth. xi. 24, 'It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for' Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other cities where Christ had preached. Again, all the sins of the blinded nations are not comparable to the sin of unbelief. We have a black roll of their sins, Rom. i., toward the close: but yet Christ speaks of them as no sins, in comparison of the sin of those who remain in un-

belief under the drop of the gospel: 'If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.'

3. From this doctrine see *what a fair way sinners living under the gospel dispensation have for the eternal salvation of their souls.* Why, they have the law coming out of Zion, acts of grace and mercy issued out and proclaimed to them, and they fully warranted and authorized to take the benefit thereof. If a company of condemned rebels had the king's indemnity or act of grace proclaimed to them, and the act put in their hand, who would be to blame if they did not take the benefit of it? surely none but themselves. The case is the very same with sinners, condemned by the law, by conscience, and heaven and earth; they have the gospel or law of grace published to them, with this view, 'That they may not perish, but have everlasting life; for unto you is the word of this salvation sent, the promise is even to them that are afar off.' O Sirs, 'how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great a salvation,' and a salvation brought so near to you in the 'word of faith which we preach?' Rom. x. 8. Sirs, the devil and an unbelieving heart will persuade you, that Christ and his righteousness are quite out of your reach, and that it is needless for you to look after it; Christ is in heaven, and how shall I be the better of him? But, for the sake of your immortal souls, beware of this way of thinking, for it brings in a secret despair into the heart, that makes men hang down their hands. and turns them quite careless and indifferent about Christ, his righteousness and salvation. See what the apostle says to you and me, Rom. x. 6—8. He had told, ver. 5, what the law of works says, 'The man which doth those things shall live by them;' but then he tells what the gospel says, which he calls 'the righteousness of faith, *because* therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,' from the faith of God revealing, to the faith of man receiving. Well, what says the gospel, or the law giving righteousness? It 'speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is,

to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach.' What can be nearer to a man, than the word that is in his mouth, or the thought that is in his heart? Yet so near doth Christ, and his righteousness, and salvation, come to every man that hears the gospel; for if when we are speaking of it, or thinking of it, our souls would but believe it, Christ and his righteousness becomes our own for ever. And therefore you that would have a righteousness to answer the charge of the law of works, a righteousness that will bear you through when you come to the tribunal of God, O take hold of the law of faith coming out of Zion; 'for therein is revealed the righteousness of God,' Christ is therein given and offered as 'the Lord our righteousness. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

4. See hence *what a happy and auspicious government and administration* believers are under; they are not under the rigorous administration of the law or covenant of works, requiring either perfect or sincere obedience as the condition of life, but under the mild government of grace, where the law coming out of Zion prevails. Heb. xii. 18, compared with ver. 22—24, 'Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest:—but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.' Every son of Adam lives within the confines of one of these mountains; I mean of mount Sinai or mount Zion. The sinner that is out of Christ, let him be what he will, a

sober moralist, a painted hypocrite, or loose and profane, he lives within the confines of mount Sinai, and remains a debtor to do the whole law, under pain of eternal death. But that moment a sinner believes in Christ, by virtue of the covenant of grace, or the law issued forth from Zion, he is joined to that heavenly corporation of the church militant and triumphant, consisting of angels, and the spirits of just men perfect and imperfect, whereof Christ is the glorious head (called *mount Zion* and *the heavenly Jerusalem*), where he is for ever delivered from the commanding and condemning power of the law as a covenant, so that he is no more to look either to be justified or condemned thereby. By the law coming out of Zion, he is exempted from the command of the law as a covenant, so that it cannot exact obedience of him, as the condition of life, this being done by the Surety. He is exempted also from the curse of the law as a covenant, so that it cannot threaten him with the penalty of eternal death, Christ his Surety having endured that in his room and stead, so that there is no condemnation to him, being in Christ Jesus. Not only so, but by virtue of his union with Christ, the Heir of all things, he is entered among 'the general assembly of the first-born,' who are all 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.' Thus, I say, the believer lives under a happy and auspicious administration, on which account we may apply the words of Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 29, 'Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!' or this of Balaam, Numb. xxiii. 9, 'The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.'

5. From this doctrine see whence it is that believers, when under the influence of the Spirit of faith, *have such boldness and assurance in coming to a throne of grace*. Why the man has law, even the law coming out of Zion on his side, and this gives him courage and boldness in asking grace and mercy to help him in time of need. You know, a man, who has business in any court, if he has law on his

side, holds up his head, and looks with an air of courage, and speaks with boldness to the judge. This is the case with the believer, he has the law coming out of Zion, the acts of grace, acts of peace, I mean all the promises of the well-ordered covenant on his side. He pleads upon these, fastens upon the veracity of a God of grace, and requires him to do as he has said, to see to the execution of his own will of grace, enacted at a throne of grace, and registered in the court-book of the grace of God. This, I say, is the ground of his confidence, Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;' upon which it follows, ver. 23, 'For faithful is he that hath promised.'

Use third may be of *trial*. Whether are you under the law of Sinai or of Zion? Whether are you under the law covenant or gospel covenant? Are you yet staying at mount Sinai, with the bond-woman and her seed? or are you come to mount Zion, the place of freedom and liberty, with the children of the promise? For clearing of this matter, I offer the following things by way of trial.

1. If the law *never slew you*, you are yet under it, and married to it as a husband: Gal. ii. 19, 'I through the law, am dead to the law.' Rom. vii. 9, 'I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' Every man naturally sits mounted upon the throne of his own imaginary righteousness; he imagines himself to be alive, and that he is capable to do well enough by his endeavours after life. But when the law of God comes in its spirituality, it shakes the foundation of his refuge of lies, just as the earthquake shook the foundation of the prison at the jailer's conversion, making the poor man to cry out, 'O what shall I do to be saved?' Try yourselves then by this. Has God brought you to the foot of Sinai, making the thunders of his law to awaken you out of your security? Has he given you such a view of the law in its extent and spirituality, that you became quite dead to all conceit of righteousness by any doing or obe-

dience of your own, saying, 'All my righteousness is as filthy rags?' If you were never yet brought to this pass, I fear you are yet strangers to the law of grace issuing out of Zion, and that you are yet under the law of works as a covenant.

2. You *who do not know what it is to watch, and pray, and wrestle against the legal bias of your hearts*, it is a sign that you are yet cleaving to mount Sinai law. As every man by nature is seeking righteousness by the law of works, so believers themselves, while they have any thing of the old Adam in them, will find a strong bias in their hearts to return to that husband. They find it a matter of the utmost difficulty to keep their treacherous legal heart from resting on its duties, frames, graces, attainments, as a ground of acceptance before God; and a sense of this makes them mourn before the Lord as much, if not more, than for their other failings and infirmities. And therefore you who know nothing of this natural bent of your hearts towards the law as a covenant, and you who do not know what it is to watch, and pray, and wrestle against this bias of your hearts, it says that you are yet within the confines of mount Sinai, not as yet come to mount Zion.

3. When you are under any distress or trouble of conscience, *what quarter do ye run to for comfort and relief?* What is it that affords you ease? The man that is married to the law runs to his husband for relief; I mean, he plies the oar of his own obedience, he heals his wound with a plaster of vows, tears, penances, and endeavours after amendment. But, Sirs, you that heal the wounds of conscience with such a plaster, you are yet at mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage. The true believer, who is 'come to mount Zion,' when an arrow from mount Sinai smites and wounds him, he does not run to Sinai, but 'to mount Zion, to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' No balm but that of Gillead will heal his wound; he cannot find ease, but only under the wings of the Sun of righteousness.

4. Ye who can be troubled for gross sins and outbreak-

ings, but *were never affected with, nor afflicted for the guilt of Adam's sin*, the corruption of your nature, the heinous nature of the sin of unbelief, I suspect you never saw the law in its spirituality, and consequently are not dead to it as a covenant. There are two things that are more heavy to a believer, who is 'come to mount Zion,' than any other thing whatsoever, viz., original sin and the sin of unbelief; these, O these are the things that make him many times go with a bowed down back, crying, 'Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death!'

5. What is it that sets you a work in the mortification of sin? for the legalist may set himself to mortify sin as well as the true believer, but here lies the difference, they act from different principles. The legalist mortifies sin, and opposes it merely out of self-love, that he may be kept out of hell, or procure a title to heaven; but the true believer principally acts from a principle of love to Christ; he looks on him whom he has pierced, and this fires him with resentment, so that he studies to avenge Christ's quarrel by piercing the heart of his most beloved lusts and idols. The man has a love to Christ, a desire to glorify God, and to maintain fellowship and communion with him; these are the principal things that constrain him to duty, and restrain him from sin. And therefore turn inward, and see whether self-love or love to Christ have the principal influence in your obedience. I do not deny but a desire after the enjoyment of God in glory, and the eternal happiness of the soul, may, and actually do influence the soul to obedience in a secondary way; but beyond doubt, the love of Christ and the glory of God is the ultimate and principal spring of obedience.

6. If you do not see so much weakness and corruption, so much deadness and distraction attending your best duties, *as to convince you of the absolute need of the blood of Jesus, and of his merit and mediation*, to render both you and them acceptable to God, it is an evidence that you are not yet come off from mount Sinai law as a covenant. The

poor believer, when he has reached the greatest enlargement in duty, and the best frame that he can desire, yet he will be ready to cry out, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?' He sees himself to be an *unprofitable servant*, and that 'his goodness extends not to the Lord.'

7. If you be more concerned to *bulk well in the externals of religion, than in an acquaintance with the inward power of it*, it is an evidence that you are yet upon a law bottom, like those who cry, 'Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Wherefore have we fasted and prayed, and thou takest no knowledge?' But the believer who is come to mount Zion, although he will not neglect the external duties of religion, yet his particular concern is to grow in internal holiness, and conformity of heart and life to the Son of God, 'to have the same mind in him, which was also in Christ Jesus.' He longs to know more of *the power of his resurrection*, of the virtue of his sin-killing blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit, lifting him up after 'things that are above,' where Christ is at the right hand of God; and if he can get at this, he is the less careful about the flourishes of a profession, which is all that the hypocrite and legalist aims at, although in the mean time he will 'flourish like the palm-tree, and grow like the cedars in Lebanon.'

8. You who have your hearts *filled with enmity and prejudice* against the children of grace, the heirs of the promise, and cannot endure strict and holy walking with God, but are ready to envy those whom you think outshine you, and have your hearts filled with inward rancour and prejudice against them, or perhaps mock and persecute them, either with heart, tongue, or hand, it is an evidence that you are yet in the confines of Sinai, among the children of the bond-woman: Gal. iv. 29, 'But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.' A persecuting spirit, or a spirit of ran-

cour and envy against those whom we think more holy than ourselves and whom we fancy darken us, is a plain evidence of a legal spirit. They that are of a true gospel spirit, are ready to love the society of saints whom they think excel themselves, and the more holy they are, the better they love them; the more of the image of God is on them, or in them, the more desirable will they be unto them.

9. If you be come off from mount Sinai to mount Zion, from the law to the gospel covenant, then those things which *once in a day you accounted gain, will be but loss in your reckoning*. So soon as Paul was brought off from the law, to be a partaker of gospel grace, 'what things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ,' Phil. iii. 7. What those things are the legalist accounts gain, which the believer reckons loss for Christ, you have an account of, Phil. iii. 4—6.

Use last is of exhortation. Has God issued out a law of grace from mount Zion, for the benefit of lost sinners sinking under the curse of the law of works? and is this law so calculated by Infinite Wisdom for debasing self, and exalting the freedom of grace in the salvation of sinners? O then, for the Lord's sake, and for your own soul's sake, let me call all hearing me to come away from mount Sinai to mount Zion; come away from the law of works, which condemns the whole race of Adam in bulk, and receive the law of faith; take the benefit of these acts and edicts of grace that are emitted in the gospel from a throne of grace. Sirs, it is ordinary for kings, when they enact laws at court, showing the duty or establishing the interest and privilege of the subject, to send their heralds to intimate and proclaim them in the public places of concourse, that none may pretend ignorance; but when they have done so, they leave it to every man to take the benefit of the law or not, as he has a mind. But the great KING, whose name is *gracious and merciful*, not only orders us to intimate and proclaim the beneficial laws of sovereign grace, but he has given us express orders to urge and 'compel you to come in,' and take the benefit of his acts of grace. And there-

fore, that I may act according to my commission from the Lord, I must be allowed to make use of an argument or two to engage your compliance with my exhortation. O Sirs, quit and renounce the law of works, and take the benefit of the law of faith. Consider then,

1st. So long as you cleave to the law as a covenant, there is a *handwriting* standing against you before God uncanceled, the justice of God hath a bond over your head. 'The sin of Judah is written before him as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond.' This handwriting is never cancelled till you believe in Christ, and submit unto his righteousness. No, no, you are 'condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you.' While you are within the confines of mount Sinai law, a lowering cloud, pregnant with wrath, hangs over your head, which will infallibly dissolve in a tempest of wrath, to the everlasting ruin of your souls, unless you make your escape to mount Zion, and take the benefit of the law of grace: 'Snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of your cup.' Perhaps you may be crying, *Peace, peace*; but what will that avail, seeing God says otherwise, 'There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked?' Nay, there is a double vengeance attending them that do not take the benefit of the law of faith, and no wonder, since (as you have heard) they despise a double law, viz., of works and of faith at once; every and the least transgression even of the law of works infers wrath and vengeance, death and damnation, against the sinner. See how the apostle argues upon this head, Heb. x. 28, 29, 'He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy,' &c. Now, all this the man is guilty of who does not by faith fall in with the revelation of the law of faith, he 'crucifies the Son of God afresh,' reacts and approves the tragedy acted on mount Calvary, he 'tramples the blood of the covenant under foot, and does despite unto the Spirit of grace,' who revealed the law of faith; and therefore a double vengeance must be abiding you if you do not receive the law of faith. O unbelieving sinner, 'consider this, lest he tear you in pieces, when none

shall be able to deliver you out of his hand.' But I do not incline to end with terrors; and therefore,

Consider, 2dly, That moment you take the benefit of the law of faith (the gospel coming forth from Zion) *you are acquitted and discharged* of all that ever the law of works could demand of you. The law of works craved only a single debt of Adam in innocency, viz., the debt of obedience; but it hath a double charge upon the sinner, not only of obedience unto its precept, but also it craves that its penalty be endured; and of this double debt you are not capable to pay the least farthing. Though you were to live to Methuselah's days you could never obey one precept of the law, as it is the law of works, being utterly destitute of that principle from which, and of the end to which, all acts of obedience to the law must be performed. For the holy law does not look so much to the matter of the action as to the principle and end thereof; so that our best actions, instead of being acts of obedience to the law, are but splendid sins before God the great Lawgiver; and therefore the debt of obedience to the precept you can never pay, while you cleave to the law as a covenant. And as you are not capable to pay the debt of obedience, so neither are you in your own person capable to pay the debt of punishment or satisfaction, though you were to lie in hell fire through an endless eternity. The reason is, because justice requires an infinite satisfaction for an infinite offence; and can the punishment of a finite creature ever amount to an infinite satisfaction? Thus you are insolvent debtors to justice, by virtue of the precept and penalty of the law of works.

But now, I say, whenever you take the benefit of the law of faith, or believe in Christ as he is offered and gifted in the promise of the gospel, you are that moment assoilzied and acquitted from both these debts, and all charges that the law of works hath against you; you are no more concerned with it either in point of justification or condemnation, 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus: Who can lay

any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Perhaps, indeed, the devil may set home the law as a covenant upon the believer in Christ, craving the debt both of obedience and punishment for sin; but the believer, under the lively exercise of faith, has a ready answer to these charges. As for the debt of obedience, may the believer say, my Surety paid it by his spotless obedience, 'He magnified the law, and made it honourable, and JEHOVAH is well pleased for his righteousness' sake,' and through him the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in me; so that although now, by strength derived from him, I resolve to honour and obey the law as a rule of obedience, from a principle of love and gratitude to my blessed Husband and Redeemer, yet as a covenant I owe it nothing. And then, as for the debt of punishment and satisfaction, I owe the law of works nothing either. Why, its penalty was endured by my Kinsman and Redeemer, 'he finished it upon the cross, he was wounded for *mine* iniquities, the just suffered for the unjust,' his blood answers for my offences, and his resurrection is my discharge for justification. 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for *me*;' and therefore 'who is he that condemneth,' seeing upon this ground God does justify? It is remarkable, that the apostle puts a note of distinction on the resurrection of Christ, saying, 'Yea rather, that is risen again,' because the resurrection of Christ from the dead is an invincible proof of the full payment of the debt, which he as our Surety undertook to pay. If he had not made full payment, the prison of the grave had never been opened, and he dismissed, or 'taken from prison and from judgment,' Isa. liii. 8. O Sirs, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, our brother Joseph, our elder brother Jesus, has had his head lifted up out of prison by a glorious resurrection and exaltation; and therefore let all the seed of Israel rejoice, for he having lifted up the head as a public person and representative, our heads are lifted up in him, and with him. Eph. ii. 5, 6, 'Even when we were dead in sin, he hath

quicken'd us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath rais'd us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' And therefore, O come and let us all return unto a God of peace, who hath rais'd up Jesus Christ our Lord from the dead: 'he hath torn him, and he will heal us; he hath smitten him, and he will bind us up: after two days he reviv'd us,' who were dead in law, 'in the third day he rais'd us up' in him; and therefore let us say, in a way of believing, 'We shall live in his sight: Because Christ lives, we shall live also.' Sure I am, if we had but the lively uptaking of this mystery of a risen Christ, we would be ready to join the apostle in his doxology, 1 Pet. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

SERMON X.

A TREASURE OF GOSPEL GRACE DIGGED OUT OF MOUNT SINAI.

I am the Lord thy God.—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.—Exod. xx. 2, 3.

SOLOMON says, 'Where the word of a king is, there is power.' What power then must there be where the word of God is, who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords! Pray, Sirs, notice and consider what is said, ver. 1, 'God spake all these words.' This is enough to make heaven and earth to listen with the most profound silence and adoration. Isa. i. 2, 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. The mighty God the Lord hath spoken.' And when he speaks, he 'calls the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof' to listen, and therefore, 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. God spake all these words.' This is like the sounding of a trumpet before the king's proclamation. God spake all the words of this Bible in a mediate way, by the mouths of his holy prophets and apostles; but here God himself is the immediate speaker. Surely it must be some matter of vast moment and of the highest importance, when God himself is the preacher. Well, what are the words God spake in such an immediate manner? Ans. All these words from the 2d verse of this chapter to the close of ver. 17. And, Sirs, I would have you to remember, that all these words are spoken as directly to you, and to every soul hearing me, as ever they were unto Israel. And you and I are to reckon ourselves no less concerned now to hear and regard them, than if

we had been standing at the foot of Sinai among the children of Israel, when the heavenly trumpet sounded, and the voice of God was uttered with such awful majesty as made Moses and all Israel fall a-quaking and trembling; for all these words are directed unto us, as much as they were unto them. And therefore do not shift them, as though they were spoken only to Israel, or as if they were spoken to others, and not to you. No, no; to thee, man, to thee, woman, God now speaks all these words in this Bible; and therefore hear and listen with particular application of them to thy own soul, as if God were calling thee out of heaven by name and surname. Two of these ten words I design to speak to, namely these, taken in their connexion. *I am the Lord thy God.—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Where two things are observable. 1. A great and gracious promise, even the leading promise of the covenant, *I am the Lord thy God.* 2. A great and gracious law or commandment, founded upon the covenant promise and grant; a law, the obligation whereof nothing can shake off; *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

1. We have a great promise or new covenant grant; *I am the Lord thy God*—The greatest word ever God spake since the fall of Adam! for here he not only speaks forth his own glory and transcendent being, but he speaks over himself unto us as our God. Here is a promise, yea, something more than a promise. A promise is commonly expressed with respect to the time to come, concerning something God hath a mind to do hereafter; but here God speaks in the present time, *I am the Lord thy God; i. e.* Now while I am speaking, from this moment I become your God; and from this time forward you may claim me as such, and hold me to it, by this my grant that I make of myself unto you. God's covenant of promise is not a thing past, or a thing to come only; but a thing present, *I am the Lord thy God.*

2. In the words we have a law or commandment, suited unto, and founded upon, this covenant grant; *Thou shalt*

have no other gods before me. This, as many of the rest of the commandments are, is delivered in negative terms, prohibiting and forbidding, ‘the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying the true God, as God and *our* God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other which is due to him alone.’ And this law, or commandment, as the generality of the other commandments, is delivered in negative terms, because of the perpetual propensity of our natures, since the fall, to depart from the living God through an evil heart of unbelief. But although the command be delivered in negative terms, yet the contrary positive duty is manifestly included in it, or under it: namely, ‘to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly,’ as it is well expressed in our Catechism. As for these words, *Before me*, or *before my face*, as it may be read, this expression plainly teaches us, that an omniscient and all-seeing God, before whom all things are open and naked, and who ‘sets our most secret sins in the light of his countenance,’ taketh notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God; and consequently is well pleased with the sinner who knows and acknowledges him as the only true God, and his own God, according to the gift of the covenant which is the foundation of our claim to him. From which words,

OBSERVE, ‘That as God is the Lord and our God by his own free gift in a covenant of grace, so it is his royal will and pleasure, intimated to us in the first commandment of his law, that we should know and acknowledge him to be our own God, upon the ground of that covenant grant.’

I have framed the doctrine almost in the words of our Lesser Catechism, opening up the import of this promise and precept. And O that I could make all this company, and the whole world of mankind, if I had access, to understand what a glorious and rich treasure they have among their hands when they hear these words repeated, or repeat them themselves, *I am the Lord thy God.—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* Alas! there are many have

these words by rote, who never consider what is in them ; just like a company of people travelling the high way where an immense treasure lies under their feet. They pass and re-pass it, but miss the treasure, because they never dig into the field. So people read and repeat these words, and lose God and eternal life, that lie hid in them, because they do not advert to what they are saying or reading.

I. To speak a little of this covenant promise, *I am the Lord thy God.*

II. To speak a little of the precept, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

III. To inquire a little into the connexion betwixt these two.

IV. Apply the whole.

I. The first thing is, to speak a little of this covenant promise, *I am the Lord thy God.* And here I shall, 1. Offer a few general remarks concerning this fundamental promise or grant of the covenant. 2. Inquire a little more particularly into the import of it ; or what that is which God promises when he says so.

First, I would offer a few general remarks concerning this great covenant grant and promise, *I am the Lord thy God.* And,

1. I remark, that this, as all the other promises, is *in Christ.* My meaning is, that it goes upon a ransom found, and a satisfaction paid, unto justice by Christ our glorious Surety. Sirs, beware of imagining, that an absolute God, or a God out of Christ, utters this promise. No, no ; an absolute God is a consuming fire unto guilty sinners, and he could never speak in such a dialect to any of the sinful rebellious race of Adam, in a consistency with the honour of his holiness, justice, and sovereignty, which were offended and affronted in the violation of his royal law. Unless the Son of God had promised, as our Surety, to pay the infinite ransom that justice demanded, none of Adam's posterity had ever heard anything but the terrible thunders of his wrath and justice pursuing them for sin. So

that this covenant grant or promise, as well as the other declarations of the grace and love of God in the word to perishing sinners, must needs go upon the footing of the blood and satisfaction of Jesus. 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.' And therefore, Sirs, whenever you read or hear a word of grace from God, think upon Christ, in and through whom only God is a God of peace; and let your soul say, 'O thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.'

2. It is more than probable, that it was *God in the person of his eternal Son*, that uttered all these words at mount Sinai; and this promise in particular, whereby the law was ushered in. Here was a parliament or general assembly of angels, called at mount Sinai; and Christ the great Angel of the covenant was president, or great Lord speaker. This I gather from Psal. lxxviii. ver. 17. and 18. compared. Ver. 17. it is said, 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place.' Well, what Lord was it that was among them at Sinai? 'Even that same Lord,' ver. 18. 'who ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men,' &c. See also to the same purpose, Acts vii. 37, 38. compared. Ver. 37, 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.' Christ is that great prophet. But then notice what follows, ver. 38, 'This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him' (viz. unto Moses and the children of Israel) 'in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers.' So that it was Christ the Son of God that spake all these words in mount Sinai, saying, *I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* And by the way, this furnishes us with a notable confutation of the Arians, who deny Christ to be a supreme, self-existent, and independent God. Who did

ever doubt, that it was the supreme God, the self-existent God, that spake all these words, and delivered the law with such awful solemnity at mount Sinai? Yet, from what I have been saying, it appears, that it was none other than Christ the eternal Son.

3. I remark, that this covenant grant and promise is *the same upon the matter with the promise God had made unto Abraham* several hundred years before. Now, God's promise to Abraham was, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed;' and here he meets with his seed at Sinai, and repeats what he had said to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, *I am the Lord thy God; i. e.* I am the very same promising God that spake unto Abraham, and what I said unto him, I say it over again unto you his posterity, and give the very same ground for your faith that he had; as I was his God, so *I am the Lord thy God.* God does not come and go upon his promise, he is not *yea and nay*: he does not make a promise one day, and retract it another; no, it is always *yea and amen.* He does not speak of the promise made to Abraham as a thing out of date after so many years; no, it is as fresh and green with him as the first day he made it; *I am still the Lord thy God.* The promise is renewed in their own persons immediately by God, and they have as good a foundation laid by this means as ever Abraham had, who believed without staggering.

4. These words, *I am the Lord thy God,* contain *the leading promise of the covenant of grace.* And there is more in them than heart can conceive, or tongue express; for here is an infinite God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, making over himself in two or three words to man upon earth. O what can he give more than himself! and what will he not give when he gives himself! Rom. viii. 32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not with him also freely give us all things?'

5. This promise is so framed by Infinite Wisdom, *as to point to every individual person in the camp of Israel.* It is not *ye* collectively, but *thou* in the singular, as if he spake

to every individual person in the camp, and every man was to look to it as pointing at him in particular; like a well-drawn picture, it looked every man in the camp straight in the face. And not only did this promise point to every man and woman there present at mount Sinai, when the law was delivered, but it looked forward to all succeeding generations, and every man and woman that should spring of them; for this 'promise was to them, and to their seed.' So that no sooner did any of the posterity of Abraham come into the world, but God said to him, as much as to the men that were at the foot of Sinai, *I am the Lord thy God*. And no sooner did one of the Gentile nations join himself to the commonwealth of Israel, but immediately he found the God of Israel saying to him, *I am the Lord thy God*: and in this respect, this promise was a door of faith opened unto the Gentiles, even before the coming of Christ. And when Christ came in the flesh, and by his death and resurrection, and publication of the everlasting gospel unto the Gentile world, broke down the partition-wall betwixt them and the Jews, this promise, as well as the law subjoined thereunto, extended itself, not only to the Jews and their seed, but to the Gentiles, who were 'afar off, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call' by the sound of the gospel trumpet. So that now, under the New Testament, this promise becomes a ground of faith unto us as well as unto them; and we have the same interest in it that they had. But to clear this, I shall add,

6. A sixth remark, namely, that this promise may be considered in a threefold situation; either as it is in the heart of God, or as it is in the word of God, or as in the hand of faith.

1st. As it is *in the heart of God* or in his counsel or decree. And when viewed in this situation it is peculiar only to his chosen people, whom he has 'loved with an everlasting love' before the foundations of the world. But as it is in God's heart, it is not an object of faith unto any of Adam's posterity; no, not to the elect themselves, because they do not know that they are among the number

of the elect till they be actually believers: no man can say, at the first instant, in a way of believing, *The Lord is my God*, upon the ground of electing love. So that the promise in this situation being all one with the decree, must be laid aside as an object of faith at the first instance.

2dly. The promise may be viewed *as situated in the word*, as it is published and proclaimed to the visible church, 'to whom belong the adoption, and the giving of the law, and the promises.' View it in this situation, it is a ground of faith to every one that hears it. God said to every man in the camp of Israel, and he says to every man and woman in the visible church, *I am the Lord thy God*, and *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. And the man or woman that does not know and acknowledge God as his God in Christ, upon the ground of the promise, considered in this situation (in the word), as it is held forth in common to all as the object and ground of faith, at once rebels against the authority of God in the command, and gives the lie to his faithfulness engaged in the promise. And, therefore, 'Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should come short of it; for unto us is this gospel preached, as well as unto them,' Heb. iv. 1, 2.

3dly. This promise is also to be considered *as in the hand of faith*, or as it is applied and possessed in a way of believing. And, in this situation, it is peculiar only to a believer to have the Lord as his God; because it is only he that has a saving interest; it is he only whose 'soul has said unto the Lord, *Thou art my Lord*,' upon a covenant ground.

Secondly, I come to inquire, what may be the import of this promise, or of this covenant grant that is here laid as a foundation of faith unto Israel, and unto the church in all succeeding generations.

Before I go on, I would put you in mind of what I said already, viz. that this covenant grant or promise goes upon the ground of a ransom found, and satisfaction paid unto justice; upon which account only God's anger is turned

away, and he comforts us with such declarations of his grace as this in my text, *I am the Lord thy God*. In which words, I conceive he promises these three or four things, not to multiply particulars.

1. The infinite God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, *makes over himself by covenant* as the soul's portion and inheritance for ever. And O what a vast, large, and glorious inheritance is this! O Sirs, when God says, *I am the Lord thy God*, he says more than if he had said, heaven is thine, earth is thine, the glories of both are thine! There is something in this promise, that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,' &c. No wonder though David cried out upon the view of the Lord's being *the portion of his cup*, Psal. xvi. 6, 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.' O it is a surprising armful the soul has, when by faith it grasps an infinite God in this little word, *I am the Lord thy God*.

2. When he says, *I am the Lord thy God*, he in effect says, *All that I have I make it over unto you*. And O when he makes a grant of himself, what else will he withhold! 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not with him also freely give us all things?' Rom. viii. 32. Has he life? Yea, he is the fountain of life. Well, in this promise he gives life unto thee, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' Has he light in himself? Yea, 'God is light, and with him is no darkness at all.' Well, 'He shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.' Has he love? Yea, 'God is love.' Well, he who says he is *thy God*, 'will shed abroad his love in thy heart by the Holy Ghost, and circumcise thy heart to love him.' Has he honour? Yea, 'his work is honourable and glorious.' Well, thou shalt be preferred; if thou take him as thy God, thou shalt have a 'place among them that stand by' about his throne. Has he riches? Yea, 'honour and riches are with me.' Well, 'he will fill all thy treasures' with gold better than the gold of Ophir. Has he 'rivers of pleasures, and fulness of joy in his presence, and

at his right hand?' Well, 'the times of refreshing shall come forth from his presence' into thy soul.

3. When he says, *I am the Lord thy God*, he engages that all the attributes and perfections of his glorious nature shall jointly conspire and be forthcoming for thy good. O Sirs, immediately upon the breach of the first covenant, all the attributes of God put on an air of wrath and vengeance against man; hence Adam, after he had sinned, falls a-trembling, and flees in among the thickets of Paradise to hide himself. But O! the divine attributes, as they shine in the face of our Immanuel, and are displayed through his blood and satisfaction, appear with an air of grace, love, and pity, inviting sinners to come and shelter themselves under them, from the wrath and curse due to them for sin. So that when God says, *I am the Lord thy God*, it is upon the matter as if he should say, O impotent and helpless sinner, come under my shadow, take me as thy own God, and my power shall be employed to help and protect thee. O foolish and bewildered sinner, my wisdom shall be thine, to direct and instruct thee. O polluted sinner, who hast 'lien among the pots,' my holiness shall sanctify thee, and 'make thee like the wings of a dove,' &c. O guilty sinner, my mercy shall pardon thee; yea, my justice shall acquit thee, on the score of the ransom that I have found: my goodness shall supply all thy need, and my truth and faithfulness is pledged to accomplish all the promises unto thee: my omniscient eye shall 'run to and fro, through the whole earth, to show myself strong on thy behalf:' my providence shall be employed to manage all things for thy good and advantage; 'I will ride in the heavens for thy help, and in mine excellency on the skies.'

4. *I am the Lord thy God*; i. e. Whatever I, the infinite and eternal God, can do for thy advantage, it shall not be wanting. And O what cannot the arm of omnipotency do! 'He doeth great things, yea, wonders without number.' What wonders has God wrought for his children and people in all ages of the world! It was he that saved Noah by water from perishing in the flood. It was he that made a

lane for Israel through the deeps, as if it had been dry land. It was he that dissolved the flinty rock into floods of water, suspended the fury of the devouring flames, and stopped the course of the sun. 'His hand is not shortened that it cannot save.' Now, whatever that omnipotent arm that 'stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth,' can do for thy salvation, it shall not be wanting. All this, and infinitely more than I can name, is wrapped up in the bosom of this covenant grant, which is here laid as the foundation and ground of our faith, *I am the Lord thy God*. And this much concerning the promise.

II. The second thing proposed was, to speak a little of the precept subjoined or annexed unto this covenant promise, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. And, in speaking to the precept, I shall observe the same method as in discoursing upon the promise. 1. By premising some remarks. 2. Inquire into its import.

First, I would offer some remarks upon it. As,

1. I remark, that as the promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, is given forth by a God in Christ, so the precept in this situation must needs come from *the same fountain*. This law or commandment must be viewed as in the hand of a Mediator, and not of an absolute God. The reason is plain, because the command obliges us to have him as our God, to love and trust him as our own God, which a sinner cannot do, but only as he is in Christ. Here the command stands under a covenant of grace, as is evident from the preface. Indeed, if that glorious preface, or covenant grant, *I am the Lord thy God*, had not gone before the command, we might have taken it as coming from an absolute God; but, taking the precept in connexion with the preface, we must needs take up the law here as in the hand of a reconciled God in Christ, and as coming from that glorious fountain. And therefore let us say, with the church, 'The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, and he will save us.'

2. This commandment of the law, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, narrows or extends its obligation upon the

children of men, *in a suitableness to the revelation that he makes of himself.* When God reveals himself only by the works of creation and providence, as he doth to the heathen world, then this commandment obliges us to know and acknowledge him as a God Creator and Preserver. But when he superadds to this the revelation of himself as a reconciled God, a redeeming God in Christ, then the law superadds a new obligation, namely, to know and acknowledge him as such, and to claim him as the God of salvation, a saving, pitying, pardoning God.

3. As the promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, is the leading and fundamental blessing promised in the covenant of grace, which draws all other blessings along with it, so this precept, Thou shalt have the Lord JEHOVAH as thy God, is *the leading and fundamental duty of the law*, which sweetly and powerfully constrains the soul to obey all the other commands of it. The reason of this is plain: when a person is determined to know and acknowledge God as his own God in Christ, it binds and obliges him inevitably not to bow down to images, or to give that worship and glory to any other which is due to him alone. He will be concerned to sanctify the name of God and his holy Sabbath, and in a word, to have respect unto all his commandments. Hence it is that faith in Christ Jesus (which is just the first commandment in other words) is so much inculcated in the scriptures, particularly of the New Testament; yea, we are expressly told, that 'without faith it is impossible to please God;' and 'he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

4. That the command and promise *are of equal extent*, so that every man that is bound to obey the command, or to have a God in Christ, as his own God, is concerned in this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*; or, in other words, he is as much obliged to believe this promise with application, as he is obliged to obey the command. The reason of this is plain, because a believing the promise with application is the very thing that the first command requires of

us; and the promise is the very ground and foundation of that faith that is required in the command; and the foundation of faith must be as extensive as the command of believing, unless we would say that God commands men to believe without giving them a foundation to believe upon; so that, if I be obliged to have the Lord as my God, then it is lawful, yea, plain duty for me, viewing the covenant grant, to say to the Lord, 'Thou art my Lord.'

5. As the promise is indefinite, *I am the Lord thy God*, without mentioning any, or including any, but pointing to every man in particular, so *the precept is indefinite, Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, without mentioning any particular person to whom it extends. And I think it is observable, that both the promise and precept are in the singular number, as if God spoke to every individual. And I do think that Infinite Wisdom has so ordered it of design, that no man might neglect the promise that thinks himself bound to obey the precept. The legal heart of man is ready to fall in with this command of the law, and own its obligation; while, in the mean time, it rejects the promise as a thing it has no concern in. What more ordinary than to hear some, especially under awakenings of conscience by the law, say, O it is a sad truth indeed that I am a debtor to the law, and obliged to obey it! But as for the promise of God, *I am the Lord thy God*, I have no interest or concern in it. But, Sirs, whatever you may imagine, I tell you, that by this way you are separating what God has joined; he has joined the command and the promise together, therefore let not your unbelieving hearts or legal spirits put them asunder; for you can never obey the first command without closing with this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*.

Secondly, I come to inquire what is included or required of us in this command of the moral law, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. I do not design to launch out in opening of this precept in its greatest latitude, or in telling you of all the duties required, and sins forbidden, in it; that which I have especially in my view, is the obligation that

it lays upon us to receive and believe the promise, *I am the Lord thy God*. And for clearing of this, there are only these few things I name, as included in this commandment.

1. This commandment obliges us to believe that *God is*, which is the first and fundamental truth both of natural and revealed religion; and except you be established in the faith of this you believe nothing to purpose. We cannot open our eyes, or look upon any of the creatures of God, whether in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, but this truth must shine into our minds with such a glaring evidence, that one would think there were no need of a command to oblige us to believe it.

2. This command obliges us to believe that *he is such a God as he has revealed himself* to be in his word and in his works. It binds us to believe all the displays that he has given of his eternal power and Godhead, in his works of creation and providence; but especially us, who enjoy the revelation of his word, to believe every thing that he has revealed of himself in that word; as, that he is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable; that he is but one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; that from eternity he decreed all things that come to pass in time; that he is the great Creator that made all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good; that by his providence he preserves and governs all his creatures, and all their actions; and that this great God, in the fulness of time, was 'manifested in the flesh,' in the person of his eternal Son, and became a Redeemer and Saviour of lost sinners; that he was 'made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;' and in a word, every other thing that God has revealed of himself.

3. This commandment requires us to believe and be persuaded, that this glorious God *is the chief good of the rational soul*; that as his glory is to be our ultimate end, so our chief happiness lies in the enjoyment of him alone, *Thou*

shalt have no other gods before me; i. e., Thou shalt place thy chief happiness in the enjoyment of me, who *am the Lord thy God*. So that, when God commands us to have him as our God, he commands us to be happy for ever in himself, and to say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee.'

4. This command requires us to assent unto every word God speaks, *as a truth of infallible verity*, and unto the truth of this promise in particular; that he speaks the truth in his heart when he says, *I am the Lord thy God*. And therefore, not to believe that it is as God says in this promise, is to call God a liar; it is an impeaching of his veracity in the promise, and a contempt of his authority interposed in the command. From whence it appears, that an unbeliever breaks the very first command of the law of nature.

5. This command requires us not only to believe the truth of the promise in general, but to believe it *with particular application of it*, each one of us unto ourselves. It is not a fulfilling of the contents of this command to believe that he was the God of Israel, or the God of the visible church, or the God of the elect, or of all that believe in him, for all this do the devils and reprobates believe; but we must believe, know, and acknowledge that he is *our God*: and every one for himself must say, in faith, with Israel, 'He is my God, I will prepare him an habitation.' The first command requires of us a faith exactly corresponding unto the promise: now, the promise is to every one in particular, *I am the Lord thy God*; and the command runs parallel with it, pointing out every man in particular, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*; and therefore it is a particular applying faith that is here required and called for. Perhaps this may appear somewhat surprising to those who never considered, that by the first commandment they are obliged to believe that the Lord is their God by covenant grant and promise. They believe that he is their Creator, and Preserver, and Benefactor, but they never thought he was their God by covenant grant, or that they were bound to believe

it with application, till once they found themselves so and so qualified.

III. The third thing proposed was, to speak a little of the connexion betwixt the promise and the precept. That there is a connexion between them is plain; for the promise is repeated in the command, and the meaning is, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, who engage myself by covenant to be *the Lord thy God*. How sweetly is the law and gospel connected here! How sweetly does the law stand in a subserviency unto the glorious designs of grace!

1st. I would have you carefully observe as to this order and connexion, that *it is suited unto the circumstances of the lost sinner*, or of fallen man, who has nothing and can do nothing, but is 'wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, and naked.' Because man can now do nothing for his life, therefore God will give him life and glory for nothing at all; and as a testimony of his having got all freely from God, he will have him to obey. It is an order and method suited to God's great design, of debasing man, staining his pride, and of exalting the glorious freedom and riches of his grace: 'Where is boasting?' says the apostle: 'It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.' The law of faith is just the free promise, *I am the Lord thy God; I will be to them a Father, &c.* Now, by this law, and not by the law of works, self is abased, and the glory of free grace exalted.

2d. I shall only add, as to this connexion and order, that God, like a wise builder, *first lays the foundation of faith in the promise*, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*, and then enjoins the duty of believing. He first reveals the object of faith, and then lays on the duty of faith; he first makes a grant of grace, and then warrants us by his command to lay hold on it. The promise is a plaster or medicine, and the command orders the application or use-making of it. The promise is the door of salvation opened, and the command enjoins us to enter in by that door. The promise is the testament, and the command is the Judge's order and warrant to make use of the goods, without fear of vicious

intromission. The promise gives us a right of access; the command, when obeyed and complied with, gives a right of possession. By the grant of the covenant God manifests his free and sovereign grace, and by the command he manifests his royal authority, which he makes subservient unto his glorious design of grace. And so much shall serve for clearing the order and connexion between the promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, and the precept, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*.

IV. The fourth general head was the application. And the first use shall be comprised in these inferences.

1. From what is said we may see, that Christ, our glorious Redeemer, is none other *than the supreme, self-existent, and independent God*. Who ever doubted, as was hinted before, but it was the supreme God, the great Lawgiver of heaven and earth, who spoke all these words, saying, *I am the Lord thy God: Thou shalt have no other gods before me?* Whosoever reads or hears these words with opened eyes, or understanding hearts, cannot shun to cry out, 'It is the voice of God, and not of man;' yea, the voice of the supreme, self-existent God, and not of any inferior or dependent being; the voice of him whose prerogative alone it is to be the Lord of the conscience, and to 'search the heart and the reins;' for these words are quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.' As all the works, so all the words of God carry the stamp and evidence of their glorious author in their bosom. And are we not immediately struck with the impressions of the supreme, self-existent Being, when these words are uttered, *I am the Lord thy God!* Had Moses, or the children of Israel, when they stood quaking and trembling at the foot of the mount, any notions of a dependent deity speaking to them? No, they knew and believed that it was he 'whose name alone is JEHOVAH, most high over all the earth.' Yet it was cleared already, this was Christ the eternal Son of God; and therefore he must needs be the

supreme God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory with his Father. It is the most daring presumption, the most consummate ingratitude, for any of Adam's race, especially for any professed Christian, bearing his blessed name and wearing his livery, to lessen his glory, and derogate from his excellency, as if, when he is called the supreme God, it were to be understood *cum grano salis*, with grains of allowance or abatement. I am persuaded there was not an Arian at the foot of Sinai among all the many thousands of Israel; and were these words to be repeated by the Son of God with the same awful solemnity among us, I am very sure there would not be one Arian among us either.

2. From what has been said, we may see the mistake of those who assert *that faith in Christ is a new precept of the gospel*, not required in the moral law, but by a new positive law given forth under the gospel. None, I suppose, will deny, that the law required faith in a God Creator from our first parents in innocency: and if so, what need of any new law to bind and oblige us to believe in the same God revealing himself in the capacity of a Redeemer? We have already observed from the text, how sweetly the old law of nature is grafted in, in a subserviency unto the grace of the new covenant, obliging us to know and acknowledge a God in Christ as our own God, upon the footing of this glorious grant of grace, *I am the Lord thy God*. The applying or appropriating act of faith, when it is expressed in words, comes forth carrying the stamp of obedience to what the first commandment of the moral law requires. What need then of any new positive law to enjoin it? The same law that bound Adam before the fall, to believe the promise of life upon the footing of perfect obedience, bound him to believe the promise of life after the fall, upon the footing of the incarnation and satisfaction of the Son of God: and therefore, when the first promise of the seed of the woman is uttered, Gen. iii. 15. we read of no new law enjoining him to believe it; the very light and law of nature told our first parents, that

a promise, especially the promise of God, was to be believed.

3. See hence *the necessity, excellency, and warrantableness of the great duty of believing*, which we ministers are so much pressing upon you who are hearers. It must needs be the most necessary and excellent duty which God enjoins in the first precept of his law, and which he has laid as the very spring and foundation of obedience to all other precepts, namely, to receive him, and to acknowledge him as our God in Christ, and him alone; and to rest in him, and upon him, as our upmaking and everlasting all. Hence, John vi. 28, 29. when the Jews were fond to know what they should do to work the work of God, he directs them to faith in himself; because this was the first thing that the law required as it stood under a covenant of grace: 'This is the work of God,' (his work in a way of eminence; the very first and fundamental work, and the spring and soul of all obedience,) 'that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' For this reason, true obedience to the law is called 'the obedience of faith:' and we are told, Heb. xi. 6. that 'without faith it is impossible to please God;' and, 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin,' Rom. xiv. 23; because, until this first command of the law be obeyed, till we receive, embrace, and acknowledge the Lord as our God in Christ, we do nothing at all in obedience to God's law, but break it every moment of our life. Again, as I said, we see here also the warrantableness of believing in Christ, and of embracing the promise. It is as warrantable for a lost sinner to embrace the promise, and to receive Christ by virtue of the promise, as to do any other thing that the law requires. Will any man doubt his warrant to honour and reverence the name of God, to honour his father and mother, to sanctify the Sabbath? &c. As little reason has he to doubt his warrant by faith to lay claim to this glorious grant of sovereign grace through Christ, *I am the Lord thy God*; seeing this is the very thing that is required in this command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*.

4. See hence *a solid ground for the assurance of faith*.

Why it has the noblest ground in the world to go upon, namely, the infallible word of a God of truth, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*; and the best warrant in the world, namely, the first commandment of the law, requiring us to know and acknowledge him as *our God*. The first command requires a persuasion of the promise, with application or appropriation of it to the soul in particular: and what is that but the assurance of faith? And no doubt the law requires every duty, and particularly this in its perfection; the consideration of which may make every one of us, yea, even the best believer upon earth, to cry out with the poor man in the gospel, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;' and, with the disciples, 'Lord, increase our faith.'

5. See hence the *proper bottom of true Christian morality*, and an excellent test whereby to distinguish betwixt gospel and legal preaching. You see here, upon what foundation God himself inculcates the duties of the moral law: he first discovers himself as a reconciled God, a promising God in Christ, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*; and, upon this ground, urges the duties of the law. Now, the order of doctrine observed by God himself, ought certainly to be observed by us in our inculcating any duty of the law upon our hearers; and if this method be not observed, it is certainly legal. Neither do I think that it is enough, when we are pressing any duty of the law, to come in with a direction or advice at the end, telling that all is to be done in the strength of Christ; we see here that God begins his sermon of morality to Israel, from Mount Sinai, with a revelation of himself as the Lord God gracious and merciful through Christ, *I am the Lord thy God*; and lays this as the foundation of obedience to the following precepts. And I do think, that we who are ministers, when we inculcate the duties of the law upon people, we ought always to keep the grace of the new covenant in their eye; for unless obedience to the law be influenced with this view it cannot be the obedience of faith, and consequently cannot be acceptable: 'Without faith it is impossible to

please God.' It is observable, that God, in the promulgation of the law to Israel, frequently intermixes the grace of the new covenant with the precepts of the law, and every now and then casts it up in their view, that he was the Lord their God in Christ. So in the second command, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c., for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, &c., shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.' So in the third commandment, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' &c. So in the fourth, 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,' &c. So likewise in the fifth, 'Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' Thus, I say, he makes gospel grace, like a thread of gold, to run through the duties of the law, whereby the whole law is sweetened and beautified, his yoke made easy, and his burden light.

Upon the other hand, there is an error, I fear too common among some. Whenever they hear a minister pressing duty, immediately they conclude him to be a legal preacher, without ever considering upon what ground he doth it; for if he press the duties of the law upon the ground of covenanted grace, he acts according to his commission, and keeps the order and method that God has laid; but if this method be not followed, if the duties of the law be urged as the foundation of our claim to the privileges of the gospel, or without keeping Christ and the grace of the gospel in the eye of the sinner, as the foundation of duty, you may indeed conclude, that it is legal. Although what the man says may be truth, abstractly considered, yet the truth is not delivered in its due order and connexion; and therefore has a tendency to mislead the hearer, at least to lead him into perplexing exercises.

6. See hence the truth of what the apostle asserts concerning God, 1 John iv. 16, '*God is love.*' Why, the promise here is a promise of love. What more can infinite love say than what is here said, *I am the Lord thy God?*

What can he give more than himself? And as the promise is a promise of love, so the precept is a precept of love, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* He first makes a free grant and gift of himself to us in his covenant, and then concludes us under a law of love, whereby he makes it the first and fundamental duty of obedience to him, that we shall know and acknowledge him as *our own God*; or in other words, that we should be happy for ever in the enjoyment of him. The most consummate happiness of the rational creature lies in what God here commands, viz., in having him and none other as *our God*. Oh, how excellent is his loving kindness! surely 'God is love,' it is the regnant perfection of his nature. And O how reasonable is it that we should love the Lord OUR GOD with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind! And O how unreasonable is the enmity of the heart against God! Do we thus requite a God of love? Well may the Lord say to us, as he did to Israel, 'O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.'

The last use I make of this subject is of exhortation to obey and keep the first commandment, by taking hold of this covenant grant, *I am the Lord thy God*: which is all one, as if I should exhort you to believe in Christ, or receive and rest upon him alone. When a sinner believes in Christ, what does he else but receive God in Christ, as his God, by virtue of the covenant of grace, placing his only rest and happiness through eternity in the enjoyment of him alone? And is not this the very thing required in the first commandment, or a having no other gods before him? The gospel, holding forth the object of faith, and the command requiring the obedience of faith, has been one and the same in all ages of the world, however differently expressed and dispensed. We generally look upon the law of God delivered to Israel at mount Sinai, as binding and obligatory upon us; and no doubt it is the rule of obedience to all mankind unto the end of the world, who shall read or hear it. And I am so far from thinking or teach-

ing, that the obligation of the holy law is dissolved by the grace of the gospel, that I think it plain, from the connexion Infinite Wisdom has laid betwixt them here, it is simply impossible any man can share of the grace of the gospel, but in a way of obedience to the very first commandment of the law, as already explained. And therefore my exhortation to every one hearing me is, to yield obedience to this first commandment of the law; lay claim by faith unto a God in Christ as your God, by virtue of the covenant, where he says, *I am the Lord thy God*; and see that you *have no other gods before him*. Do not think that I exhort you to this, as though I supposed you had any strength or power of your own to obey; no, we are naturally without strength, wholly impotent to do anything spiritually good: but when I exhort you to obey this commandment, I exhort you to obey it in a dependence upon the grace of him who commands you to have him as your own God, and who engages himself by covenant to be our God, and so to be the author and finisher of our faith.

But I shall not insist in pressing this exhortation with arguments. One would think that no man that believes a future state of eternal happiness or misery needs to be much urged to know and acknowledge God in Christ as his God, upon this new grant of sovereign grace; this being the very hinge upon which a comfortable eternity doth turn. All I shall do further in prosecuting this exhortation, is to answer a few objections which carnal reason and unbelief will very readily muster up against this doctrine and exhortation.

Object. 1. May one say, *I have lost all claim and title to the Lord as my God*, by violating the holy law; and I think I hear God saying to me with a frown, 'How shall I put thee among the children,' who hast forfeited thy relation to me? and therefore I dare not own and acknowledge him as the Lord my God. Ans. It is indeed true, that you and I, and all mankind, have lost our title and relation to him as our God by the first Adam, and the breach of the first covenant: and since the fall of Adam God never said to

any sinner upon a law ground, *I am the Lord thy God*. No, when a sinner looks at that quarter, his hope and strength perish for ever from the Lord. But, O Sirs, here is a new covenant, a new gift or grant that God makes of himself, which does not go upon the ground of our obedience to the law as its condition, but upon the ground of sovereign grace, reigning through the righteousness of God-man. Here, I say, is a new claim of right presented to the guilty sinner, *I am the Lord thy God*; 'I will be unto them a Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' These and the like absolute and indefinite promises are universally dispensed to all and every one as the ground of faith. And lest any sinner, through a sense of guilt, should scare to lay hold upon this new claim of right, here is the warrant subjoined and annexed to the claim, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*.

Object. 2. I am afraid lest God be not saying this *to me* in particular, *I am the Lord thy God*; and therefore dare not lay hold of it; I fear lest he be not requiring me in particular, by this commandment, to know and acknowledge him as my God. Ans. It is by these and the like groundless surmises and insinuations, that an evil heart of unbelief turns us away from the living God, and from taking hold of his covenant. But pray, tell me in good earnest, do you think to dispute away the binding obligations of the very first commandment of the law of God? For, as was said, at the same time that you refuse to take hold of this covenant grant, you disobey the first and leading precept of the law. Why, will you own the obligation of the other commandments of the law, and reject this? I suppose there are none of you but will readily acknowledge, that you in particular are bound to honour your parents, not to kill, steal, commit adultery, &c. You may with as good reason say or think, that these other precepts do not bind you in particular, as imagine that you are not particularly bound by the first to know and acknowledge a God in Christ as your God. Why so much

prejudiced against the first and chief commandment of God beyond all others? What account can be rendered for it, that men should thrust away from them the first commandment of the very law of nature, when grafted into the gospel covenant, and made so subservient to their eternal salvation? I know of no solid reason that can be given for it, but that of the apostle, 'The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.'

Object. 3. I cannot refuse that the command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, is binding upon me in particular; but I can never think that it is *to me in particular* that God is saying, *I am the Lord thy God*. Ans. Who authorized you, or any of Adam's race, to put asunder what God has joined? I am sure it is not by God's warrant that this is done; and therefore you may easily divine that it is from a worse quarter. It is the great plot of Satan to break that connexion which God has laid betwixt the gospel and the law; for he knows very well, that if the gospel be separated from the law, or the law from the gospel, in the matter of practice, not one of the commandments of the law can be obeyed to purpose. And this first command in particular, if it be disjoined from the gospel promise laid in the preface, *I am the Lord thy God*, can no more be obeyed by a sinner, than if he were commanded to pull the sun or moon out of the firmament. Pray consider, while you own the obligation of the precept, and meanwhile refuse your interest or concern with the preface, you acknowledge your obligation to obedience, and yet at the same time cast away the foundation upon which your obedience is to stand; thus you build without a foundation, and how can that building stand? It will fall, and great will be the fall of it. And therefore, in the name of God, I proclaim that this promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, is to you and your seed, and to all that are afar off. Did not God speak to every individual in the camp, when he uttered these words, *I am the Lord thy God*; as well as when he added, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*? The same is he saying to you, and me, and every one of

us; and therefore let us not cast away our own mercy; to us, as well as unto them, 'belong the adoption, and the covenants, and the giving of the law and the promises.'

Object. 4. What if all that is intended in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*, be only either *an assertion of divine sovereignty*, or of an external federal relation to Israel as the seed and posterity of Abraham? and the only visible church? And if so, where is there a foundation in them for me to believe in him as the Lord my God? Ans. I am far from excluding any of these things the objection mentions as comprehended in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*; and I grant, that if no more were included in them, I do not see how they could be a foundation of special and saving faith to me, or any else. But that it is otherwise, will not readily be denied by any, if they consider what it is God requires of us in the first command, as inseparably connected with the preface. Pray consider it a little. Is this all that God calls for by the first precept of his law, to know and acknowledge him as our sovereign Lord Creator, or that he is a God to the visible church by external federal relation? No doubt these are truths indispensably to be believed: but there is more required, namely, to believe that he is the Lord our God in Christ, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. The external federal relation that God bears to the visible church, becomes special when this promise is applied by a saving faith; hence this is the common argument wherewith Israel is urged to believe and repent through all the Old Testament; particularly, Psal. lxxxix. 9—11. And whenever saving faith was acted whereby their turn unto him was influenced, they commonly fasten upon, and apply this fundamental promise in my text, Jer. iii. 22. So that, I say, there is more in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*, than a bare assertion of divine sovereignty, or of his covenant relation to Israel as a visible church. There is in them a glorious new covenant grant or gift that God makes of himself to us in Christ as our God, to be applied by a saving faith; and when such a faith is acted upon it, the native echo of the soul unto it

is, 'This God is my God;' I believe it, because he himself hath said it, and said it not to others only but to me in particular: 'I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.'

Object. 5. If this promise be made to every one in the visible church, how shall the veracity of the Promiser be salved or vindicated, seeing *there are many who come short of it*, many to whom he never becomes their God in a special covenant relation. Unto this objection I might answer by way of retort, How is it that the unbeliever makes God a liar, if the promise be not made to him in particular? for if the promise, and the faithfulness of the Promiser, be not to him, he cannot be blamed for not believing, or not setting to his seal to a promise never made to him. Can he be condemned for not intermeddling with a thing that does not belong to him? Again, I ask, How was it that God, in a consistency with his faithfulness, made unbelieving Israel to know his breach of promise, Numb. xiv. 34. after he had made a grant or gift of the land of Canaan to them, and promised to bring them into it, while yet they never were allowed to enter it, but dropped their carcasses in the wilderness, God having sworn that they should not enter into his rest? The faithfulness of God, in breaking his promise that he had made to that generation, is salved by landing the blame upon their own unbelief. They believed not his word, they trusted not in his salvation, they gave more credit to the false lying report of the wicked spies, than to the word and promise of him for whom it is impossible to lie; and because they made God a liar, therefore his promise made to them turned to be of no effect unto them. In like manner, a promise is left us of entering into a spiritual and eternal rest; but meantime most have reason to fear lest God make them to know his breach of promise, by excluding them out of that promised rest, because of their unbelief. The faithfulness of God is not in the least impeached hereby, because the unbeliever calls his faithfulness in question, and rejects his promise as a thing not worthy of regard. Can a man be charged with

unfaithfulness, in not bestowing himself and his estate upon a woman to whom he has made a promise of marriage, if the woman to whom it was made refuse his offer and promise? The faithfulness of the bankers of Scotland is engaged in particular to the bearer of their note; but if the bearer shall tear the note, or throw it a way as a piece of useless paper, their veracity is no wise impeached though they never pay that man the sum contained in the note; so is it here.

Object. 6. If I could find *the marks and evidences of saving grace* once wrought in my soul, then indeed I could acknowledge and believe the Lord is my God; but till then I dare not, neither do I think it my duty. Ans. I do own that none can warrantably draw this conclusion that they are in a state of grace within the bond of the covenant, or savingly interested in the Lord as their God, till they have examined the matter at the bar of the word, and upon trial have found such marks of grace as warrant them to draw such a conclusion. But this is not the question now under consideration. The question at present is, Whether it be lawful and warrantable for a poor sinner, who is so far from finding any works of grace or gracious qualifications in himself, that he can see nothing but sin and misery, feels himself to be an heir of hell and wrath; whether, I say, it be his duty, upon the footing of this covenant grant and promise, *I am the Lord thy God*, to know, believe, and acknowledge the Lord as his God? And if this be the question, which it must be, it is all one as if it were asked, whether it be the immediate duty of such a person to obey the first command of the moral law as it stands under a covenant of grace? or, whether a person is to forbear obedience to the first command in the law of God, till he find gracious qualifications wrought in his soul? To affirm which, were upon the matter to say, that the first commandment of the law does not enjoin the first duty of religion, but that something is to be done before we do the thing that God requires of us in the first place as the foundation of all other acts of obedience; and that is, to know

and believe that God in Christ is our God, by virtue of a covenant of grace contained in these words, *I am the Lord thy God*. Such strange absurdities we inevitably run ourselves into, when we keep not in the cleanly path of faith chalked out to us in the word.

Object. 7. We fear that this way of teaching lead us in to a *presumptuous confidence*, and therefore we are afraid to meddle with it. Ans. God teaches no man to presume when he requires him to have no other gods before him. Your approved Catechism does not teach you to presume, when it tells you that God in this commandment requires you to know and acknowledge him as God, and as your God; and that because he is the Lord, and *our* God, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments. But besides, the man who in a presumptuous way lays claim to the Lord as his God, he either lays claim to him out of Christ, or he does it not upon the footing of the faithfulness of God engaged in the covenant; or else, while he says with his mouth that the Lord is his God, he hath other gods before him; in which case, God says to the man, 'What hast thou to do to make mention of my covenant? seeing thou ' hast other gods before me in thy heart, and thus thou 'hatest instruction, and castest my counsel behind thy back.'

Object. 8. God is angry, *he carries toward me as an enemy*, he smites by the word and rod; how then shall I adventure to say he is the Lord my God? Ans. It is true God was angry; but his anger or vindictive wrath having spent itself upon our glorious Surety, we may now say, with the church, Isa. xii. 1, 'His anger is turned away, and he comforteth us. Behold God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid.' Having smelt a sweet savour in the sacrifice of the death of Christ, the deluge of wrath is recalled, and a proclamation issued out, 'Fury is not in me:' *I am the Lord thy God: Thou shalt have no other gods before me*. O Sirs, this is not the language of anger and wrath, but the language of love, mercy, and of infinite bowels of pity and good-will toward man upon earth. As for the appearance of

anger in his dispensations, no man can know either love or hatred by all that is before him. The only way to judge of the love of his heart, is to read it in and by his words of grace; for these, and not his external dispensations, are the exact portraiture of his deep and infinite heart. It is true indeed, we are told that 'God is angry with the wicked every day;' but what is his grand and fundamental quarrel with them? It is this, that though he has said, *I am the Lord thy God and Redeemer*; though he has given such a glorious proof of this as to give his only begotten Son, and to give him up to the death for our redemption; though he has engaged his faithfulness to us in a new covenant; yet they will not know and acknowledge the Lord as God, and as their God, but will have some other gods before him. To conclude; the design of all the threatenings of the word, and of all the angry-like dispensations of his providence is, that we may flee from his wrath, and may not rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler, but may turn to him as our God in Christ, and live, Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Object. 9. What if it was only *to the elect or believers in the camp of Israel* that God spake, when he said, *I am the Lord thy God*? If so, they cannot be a foundation of faith to all. Ans. This objection still breaks the connexion God has made betwixt the promise and the precept, which must not be. I believe no man will adventure to say, that the command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, was only to the elect and believers; but to the elect and reprobate, believers and unbelievers. The whole law was given to every man, no man exempted; now, did God tie them all to obedience by his command, and yet at the same time take away the foundation of obedience, which lies in the promise? No, the one must run parallel with the other; the promise in its exhibition must be as extensive as the obligation of the command; the object of faith must be presented to all whose duty it is to believe; the promise is among things revealed as well as the precept, and therefore do equally belong unto us. 'What God has joined let no man separate.' It is true these words, *I am the Lord thy*

God, considered as in his mind, purpose, and decree, belonged only to the elect; but considered as uttered or spoken indefinitely, they cease to be a decree with respect unto us; we are to look upon them as a promise tendered to us as the ground of our faith; and so they have a respect to every one commanded to have him as his own God.

I shall shut up this discourse with two or three words of exhortation or advice to you who have in reality obeyed this first commandment of the royal law, by laying hold upon God in Christ as your God, by virtue of his faithfulness engaged in this glorious grant, *I am the Lord thy God*. O what shall we, or what can we render unto him, who, after we had lost him as our God by sin, renders himself back to us in a new covenant, sealing it with his own blood, and attesting it by the three that bear record in heaven! There are these few things the Lord thy God requires of thee in a way of gratitude.

1. *Love him* as thy God, and love all that bear his image; for this is the sum of the ten commandments, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' This love is the fulfilling of the law.

2. *Trust him* as thy God; 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength. Trust in him at all times, ye people.' Trust him for every promised blessing, and ask them of him in prayer, for they are agreeable to his will. 'And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. Cast all thy cares upon thy God, *and* in every thing by prayer let your requests be made known unto him.'

3. *Worship him* as thy God: 'He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.' And O worship him in the beauties of holiness, for 'holiness becomes his sanctuary for ever.'

4. '*Walk before thy God*, and be thou perfect. All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. Walk worthy of him who hath called you out of darkness

into his marvellous light. Let your light so shine before men, as others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

5. *Praise, extol, and magnify him as your God:* Exod. xv. 2, 'He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.' Let the high praises of thy God be continually in thy mouth, that ever said to thy soul, *I am the Lord thy God.* Join issue with David, Psal. xviii. 46, saying, 'The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted.'

6. Lastly. *Disband all other gods: Thou shalt have no other gods before me:* let nothing usurp his room. 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt but hearken unto me: there shall no strange god be in thee: neither shalt thou worship any strange god. *I am the Lord thy God,* Psal. lxxxix. 8—10.

SERMON XI.

UNBELIEF ARRAIGNED AND CONDEMNED.

He that believeth not, is condemned already.—John iii. 18.

CHRIST having, in the preceding verse, declared the great end and design of his mission by the Father, or of his manifestation in our nature, namely, not that he should ‘condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;’ in the verse where my text lies, deduces a two-fold inference therefrom. The first is very sweet and comfortable, in the former part of the verse, ‘He that believeth on him is not condemned:’ that is, he who falls in with the great end of my manifestation in the nature of man, he who gives me my errand, by intrusting his lost and ruined soul into my hand, although he be a sinner, and a great sinner, though the law and justice of God be pursuing him, for the many millions of talents he is owing; yet the process shall be stopped, the judgment arrested, the sentence of the broken law cancelled, insomuch that he cannot come into condemnation. And if he be not condemned he must be absolved and acquitted; I, as his Surety, have paid the debt, and obtained the discharge under the hand of justice; I was *made sin for him, that he might be made the righteousness of God in me*: and therefore, who can lay any thing to his charge?

The second inference, drawn from the design of the incarnation of the Son of God, is very terrible and awful; and you have it in the words I design to insist a little

upon, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.* For which there is a very relevant reason given, in the close of the verse, 'Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.'

In the words we may notice, (1.) A capital crime chargeable upon most of gospel hearers, *not believing.* (2.) An awful sentence passed against the criminal; *he is condemned.* (3.) The quality of the sentence, implied in that expression, *condemned already.* This may point either at the certainty of the unbeliever's condemnation: it is not simply a thing future, or to be done; but it is done already. The sentence is pronounced and gone forth against him, from the mouth of the righteous Judge; yea, not only is sentence passed, but is partly executed, the law having delivered him over, in a way of righteous judgment, into the power and dominion of sin, which is spiritual death. Or the word *already* may point at the severity of the unbeliever's sentence; his sin is of such a deep dye, of such a criminal nature, that the Judge cannot bear with it, as he doth with other sins, Psal. l. 21. It offers such indignity to his beloved Son, the darling of his soul, that he cannot shun to adjudge the pannel to immediate death. Or the word may intimate this much to us, that the sentence of the broken law stands in full force and vigour against the unbelieving sinner, for all his other sins: he despises the only remedy, the only sacrifice for sin; and therefore every sinful thought, word and action, exposes him to the just vengeance of a righteous God, in time, and through endless eternity.

My doctrine is, 'That every unbeliever is a sentenced and condemned criminal before God. Or, take it, if you will, in the very words of the text, *He that believeth not, is condemned already.*'

Here, through divine assistance, I shall speak,

I. Of the crime.

II. Of the sentence.

III. Of the ground on which the sentence is founded.

IV. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. I would speak a little of the crime, which is unbelief, by giving some account of it.

Before I proceed to shew wherein it consists, to prevent mistakes, I shall name a few things, which will not amount unto this heavy charge in God's reckoning, whatever they may sometimes do in the court of an erring or misinformed conscience.

1. Unbelief does not lie *in a person's being in the dark as to his actual union with Christ*, or interest in him. A real believer may want the sensible assurance of God's love, and yet at the same time be acting faith with an assurance of appropriation upon the promise of a reconciled God in Christ. Sense may be saying, as in the case of Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 'Thou has laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps, I am afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.' And yet faith breathing out its appropriating act, and saying, 'O Lord God of my salvation;' will look in the face of a hiding and smiting God, and say, 'Though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him.' And seeing it is so, it must needs follow, that unbelief does not lie in a person's being in the dark as to his actual interest in Christ. To say so, were to offend against the generation of the righteous, who may be 'trusting in the name of the Lord, and staying themselves upon their God, while they walk in darkness, and see no light.'

2. Unbelief does not lie in *the interruption of the actings and exercise of faith*. We find the faith of the most eminent saints many times interrupted in its exercise, through the prevalency of temptation and indwelling corruption. In Psal. lxxvii. 8, 9, the holy man, in a fit of unbelief, cries, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? doth his promise fail for evermore?' David, in a like case, gives the lie to a God of truth, through the sides of all his prophets, Psal. cxvi. 10, 11. 'I said in my haste, All men are liars.' This was indeed a pang of unbelief, but did not argue unbelief in its reign. Many times faith is laid asleep in its habit, while yet the life of it remains; like Samson in the

hands of the Philistines, though his life was continued, yet the locks wherein his strength lay, were cut.

3. This unbelief, whereof I speak, does not consist in *a disbelief of some particular truths of the word, through ignorance*, providing they be not fundamental. Every error in the head, through ignorance, does not destroy the being of faith in the heart; no more than every miscarriage in the life, through weakness, destroys the being and reality of the grace of God in the soul. The apostles, we find, all the time of Christ's life, yea, after his resurrection also, were in an error as to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, imagining that it was to be modelled after the fashion of the kingdoms of this world; neither did they believe the universal call and offer of the gospel unto the Gentile nations, as well as to the Jews, until they were convinced of their error by Peter's vision. But, notwithstanding of this error of theirs, they believed in Christ as the promised Messiah, and rested on him as the Saviour of the world.

4. I do not here speak of *the negative unbelief of the heathen world*, who never had the benefit of gospel revelation. 'How shall they believe,' says the apostle, Rom. x. 14, 'in him of whom they have not heard?' Their unbelief, or infidelity, is more properly their punishment than their sin. They can no more be punished for not believing in Christ, than a man can be condemned for not seeing the sun at midnight, or than a man can be blamed for not receiving a gift that was never in his offer. So that it is not the negative unbelief of the heathens I now speak of, but the positive unbelief of those who sit under the light of the glorious gospel.

But, say you, seeing none of these will amount to the charge of unbelief, wherein then doth it consist? I answer. There are three things, any one of which will amount to this capital crime.

1. *A denying of the truth of the gospel*; a looking upon the word of God, contained in the scriptures, as a fiction or *cunningly devised fable*. I am very jealous, there are

unbelievers of this stamp among those who are called by the name of Christians; men pretending to be great masters of reason, who, because their weak and depraved minds cannot grasp the unsearchable mysteries of our holy religion, do therefore turn infidel, and reject the whole as an incredible paradox. This very thing upon which they stumble, proves it to be of a divine original. The unsearchable wisdom that appears in every one of the works of God, proves them to be indeed his works, and not the works of any created being. And shall it be imagined, that there is less wisdom in his words than in his works, when they are the more immediate product and picture of his infinite understanding, which can never be searched out? Here, if any where, we may expect the ‘deep things of God; the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew.’

2. *A doubting or wavering uncertainty of mind about the truths of the gospel*, will amount to this crime of unbelief pointed at in my text. There are some who, though they do not go the length of denying flatly that the Bible is the word of God, or that the gospel is of a divine original, yet they are in a doubt and suspense about it; like the worshippers of Baal, they halt between two opinions, they neither believe nor disbelieve it; but are like the scales of an even balance, ready to turn either to this or the other side. Such are unbelievers, in Christ’s reckoning; for ‘he that is not with me,’ says he, ‘is against me.’

3. When though a person may be convinced in his mind, by rational arguments, that the Bible is the word of God, that the gospel is of a divine extract, yet *does not fall in with the great design of the scriptures*, by receiving Christ, and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is there presented and discovered. We have the design of the whole word of God expressed in one verse, John xx. 31, ‘These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.’ And, therefore, when Christ is not received as the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world,

and actually improved for those ends and uses for which he is revealed and exhibited in the word, particularly for 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,' in this case, I say, a person falls under the heavy charge of unbelief, and is condemned already. This last is the unbelief which I take to be principally pointed at in my text, and is most frequent and prevalent among the hearers of the gospel.

II. The second general head proposed was, to give some account of the condemnatory sentence passed against this crime of unbelief. The unbeliever is 'condemned already.'

The word rendered to *condemn*, is forensic, borrowed from courts of judgment, where the malefactor or guilty person is arraigned and indicted before the judge, his crime made legally evident, and then sentence passed against him, according to the nature and demerit of his crime. So here, the unbeliever is, as it were, arraigned before the bar of divine justice; process is led against him, and he found guilty of the violation of the royal law of Heaven, and of contemning the glorious remedy provided and offered in the gospel; and thereupon sentence goes forth against him from the mouth of the great Judge, who hath justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne. This man believes not in my Son, and therefore I condemn him to death everlasting; he rejects the Saviour of sinners, and therefore let him die in his sins; he would needs seek life by the law as a covenant, and therefore let the curse of that covenant lie on him for ever. See, to the same purpose, the last verse of this chapter, 'He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

1. Now the unbeliever is thus *condemned already in the court of the law as a covenant*, by which he is seeking to be justified and saved: Rom. iii. 19, 'Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.' Every unbeliever is upon a law bottom, he is seeking salvation and righteousness by the works of the law, by some good thing or other, which

he apprehends to be in him, or done by him, or which he hopes to do. But I may say to you, who are of this law spirit, as Christ said to the self-righteous Pharisees, John v. 45, 'There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust;' where, by Moses, we must understand the law of Moses. The same say I to you, The law accuseth and condemneth, it is denouncing its heavy anathemas against you, while you cleave to it as a covenant: 'As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' While you are out of Christ, cleaving to the law as a husband, it lays you under the curse for every and the least failure in obedience. O Sirs, the vengeance of Heaven lies upon you while you are under the power of unbelief: you are cursed in your basket and store, in soul and body, and all that belongs to you: and the curse not being causeless, it shall come; yea, it cleaves to you, and will cleave to you for ever, unless by faith you flee to him who 'hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.'

2. The unbeliever is already condemned *in the gospel court*. Now, do not mistake this way of speaking, as if, when I speak of the gospel court, I meant, as if the gospel, strictly considered, condemned any man. The gospel, like its glorious Author, comes not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through it, might be saved. Neither do I mean, as if there were new precepts and penalties in the gospel, considered in a strict sense, which were never found in the book or court of the law. This is an assertion which has laid the foundation for a train of damnable and soul-ruining errors; as of the Antinomian error, in discarding the whole moral law as a rule of obedience under the gospel; the Baxterian error, of an evangelical righteousness different from the imputed righteousness of Christ; the Pelagian and Arminian error, of a sufficient grace given to every man that hears the gospel, to believe and repent by his own power. But when I speak of the unbeliever's being condemned in the court of the

gospel, my meaning is, that the sentence passed against him in the court of the law is aggravated and heightened by his contempt of gospel grace. All I intend by it is comprised in that awful word, Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?' or that, Heb. x. 28, 29, 'He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?'

3. The unbeliever is condemned already in *the court of his own conscience*. Conscience is God's deputy and vicegerent, and, in the name and authority of the God of heaven, it keeps a court in every man's breast, and either approves or condemns, accuseth or excuseth, according to the views and uptakings that it hath of the holy law of God. When the law is only known by conscience in the letter of it, it condemns only for sins which lie against the letter of the law; but when conscience comes to be irradiated and instructed by the Spirit of God, in the spirituality and extent of the law, then it condemns even for those spiritual wickednesses that are of a more refined nature, and which lodge in the high places of the soul; of which kind is the sin of unbelief. A natural conscience, even though assisted by external revelation, will smite a man for a thousand sins, before it gives him one check for his unbelief. This seems to be the peculiar province of the Spirit of God, to 'convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ,' John xvi. 8, 9. And O! when once conscience, by the direction of the Spirit, begins to smite for this sin of unbelief, there is no sin in the world that appears in such a formidable hue, and there is no sin that the worm of conscience will gnaw a man so much for in hell through eternity, as that he had a Saviour in his offer, and yet refused him. In a word, let a man be never so moral and sober, let him have never so much seeming peace and quiet, yet he still carries an evil conscience in his breast, till by

faith he comes to get his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of sprinkling, Heb. x. 22.

4. The unbeliever is already condemned in *the court of the church*; or, may I call it, in the ministerial court. Ministers, by virtue of the commission they have received from their great Lord and Master, must 'go and preach the gospel to every creature.' And having acted according to their commission, they must in the same authority declare, that he who believes this gospel shall be saved; he who believeth not shall be damned. Indeed, this ministerial sentence is but little regarded by a profane and secure world, who are ready to say or think that our words are but wind. But whether sinners hear or forbear, we must, by our commission, declare to the righteous or believer, 'it shall be well with him;' but 'woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.' And when this ministerial sentence, whether doctrinal or judicial, is faithfully pronounced, whatever men may think of it, it is ratified in heaven: Matt. xvi. 19, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.'

5. The unbeliever is condemned in *the court of the great God*. It is true, every one of these courts I have mentioned is his; he sits as supreme Judge in each of them, but they are only his inferior courts; and while the sinner's sentence is in dependence before them, there is still access for an appeal by faith unto a throne of grace, or mercy-seat. But when once a man comes to be personally sisted before the bar of God at death or judgment, no further appeal can be admitted; the man then goes out of mercy's reach; he that made him will have no mercy upon him; the things that belonged to his peace are then for ever hid from his eyes. O that an unbelieving world may lay this to heart in time, before their case become absolutely hopeless and helpless: 'Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver.'

III. The third thing in the method was, to inquire into

the grounds of this condemnatory sentence. And, among many others, I shall instance in the few following.

1. The unbeliever is condemned already, because by his unbelief he has *offered the highest indignity to a Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead* that a creature is capable of. He despises the love of the Father, who, out of his good-will and kindness to a lost world, 'gave his only begotten Son.' He gave him to be incarnate; he gave him unto death; and gives him and his whole purchase in the revelation of the gospel, 'that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.' But now the unbeliever despises all the riches of this grace and love, and practically says, that the unspeakable gift of God is not worthy to be taken up at his foot. And as he despises the love of the Father, so he tramples upon the blood of the Son, as if it were an unholy thing. He says upon the matter, that Christ shed his blood in vain; hence unbelievers are said to 'crucify the Son of God afresh;' they re-act the bloody tragedy that was once acted upon Mount Calvary; and, upon the same account, the unbelieving communicant is said to be 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' Again, the unbelieving sinner sins against the Holy Ghost. I do not mean that every unbeliever is guilty of the unpardonable sin, for then we need not preach the gospel to them. But I mean, that every unbeliever, in rejecting Christ, runs directly cross to the work and office of the Spirit, in the economy of redemption. It is the office of the Spirit to *convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ*; but the man is so far from owning this, that he practically denies unbelief to be any sin at all. It is the office of the Spirit to *convince of righteousness*, that is, of the necessity and excellency of the righteousness of Christ for justification; but the unbeliever goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, and will not submit to this righteousness of God. It is the office of the Spirit to glorify Christ, to 'take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us.' But the unbeliever upon the matter says, 'There is no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be

desired.' Thus, I say, the unbeliever affronts a whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and therefore he is condemned already.

2. The unbeliever is condemned already, because *he has injured all the glorious attributes and perfections of the divine nature*. He rebels against awful and adorable majesty and sovereignty. The authority of God is in a peculiar manner interposed in the command of believing; God speaks of this command as if he had never given another command to the sons of men, 1 John iii. 23, 'This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' Now, the unbeliever flies in the face of all this authority, saying, with proud Pharaoh, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' Let the Almighty depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of his ways. Again, the man makes a mock of the masterpiece of Infinite Wisdom, as though it were nothing but arrant folly. The device of salvation through a Redeemer is *the wisdom of God in a mystery*; it is *hidden wisdom*; but the unbeliever, with the Greeks, calls it *foolishness*; and, with the Athenians, looks on it as mere *babbling*, when it is brought out in a gospel revelation. The unbeliever also spurns at the bowels of infinite and amazing love; yea, as it were, runs a spear into the bowels of a compassionate God, which are sending out a sound after him, 'O turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? As I live, I have no pleasure in your death.' He dares and challenges Omnipotency to do its worst, while he refuses to take sanctuary in Christ, and to turn in to the stronghold, where he may be sheltered from the storm, wind, and tempest of divine vengeance. He laughs at the shaking of God's spear and the whetting of his glittering sword. He gives the lie also to the veracity of God, 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar;' not as if he could do so indeed, for God will be true, and every man a liar; but the unbeliever does what he can to make God a liar. This is the language of his sin, God is a liar, he is not to be trusted, there is no truth in his words: which is blasphemy in the highest degree. Thus, I say, the unbelieving sinner injures

God in all his glorious excellencies. And is it any wonder, then, though he be condemned already?

3. Another ground of this awful sentence is, because the man *counteracts and runs directly cross to the most glorious designs that ever God had in view*; I mean, his designs in the work of redemption through Christ. I shall only clear this in two or three instances. (1.) God's design in redemption was the illustration and manifestation of his own glorious excellencies, which were sullied or obscured by the sin of man; but the unbeliever, as was showed just now, does his uttermost to darken and affront every one of them. (2.) God's design is, that in all things Christ should have the pre-eminency; that he should have 'a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' But now the unbeliever, like the devil, being lifted up with pride, refuses to bow or submit to that name *JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, The Lord is our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 15. Rom. x. 3. He refuses to own or bow unto that royal name written upon his thigh and vesture, Rev. xix. 16, *THE KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*. He joins in a confederacy with those who refuse to stoop under his royal sceptre, saying, 'Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us,' Psal. ii. 3. (3.) God's design in redemption is, that grace only should reign, and that all ground of boasting and gloriation should be cut off from man for ever, so as he that glorieth may glory only in the Lord. But now the unbeliever's language is, Not grace but self shall reign. He chooses rather to be damned for ever than submit to grace's government, 'reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' What, says the man, will not 'God be pleased with thousands of rams?' &c. If God will give him life for some equivalent, some good thing wrought in him or by him, he is content; but to take it for nothing as the gift of free grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, this is too low a bargain for his proud heart to stoop to. And for this pride of his heart, which makes him to run cross unto God's glorious designs in redemption, he is condemned already.

4. He is condemned already, because his sin (I mean his unbelief) is of a *more criminal nature, in God's reckoning, than any other sin* that can be named or thought upon. The sin of Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit, was a most aggravated crime. But yet the sin of unbelief far surpasses it. Again, unbelief is more criminal than the sin of the Jews in crucifying of the Lord of glory. Nay, unbelief is worse than the sin of Sodom, which provoked God to rain hell out of heaven upon its inhabitants. 'It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for' Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other cities where Christ had preached. Still farther, all the sins of the blinded nations are not comparable to the sin of unbelief. We have a black roll of their sins, Rom. i. toward the close: but yet Christ speaks of them as no sins in comparison of the sin of those who remain in unbelief under the drop of the gospel: 'If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.' Witchcraft is a very monstrous sin; what a sin for a man or woman to enter into compact with the devil, and give themselves soul and body to be his for ever: and yet the unbeliever does the same upon the matter; for he is in league with hell, and with death is he at an agreement. I remember, the rebellion of Saul against the express command of God, ordering him utterly to destroy the Amalekites, is compared to the sin of witchcraft, 1 Sam. xv. 23. Now, the unbeliever rebels against the greatest command that was ever issued out from the throne of the Majesty on high. I shall only add, that unbelief is a sin attended with aggravations which are not to be found in the sin of devils. The devil never rejected a Saviour, as the unbeliever does; for 'he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.' Some think that the devil, and his angels who joined him, were cast out of heaven for refusing to be subject to God in man's nature, when intimation of this design was made in heaven. No doubt he would have been well enough pleased to subject himself to God, manifesting himself in

the nature of angels; but to be subject to God manifested in the flesh, he looked upon it as a disparagement. But the unbeliever rejects God appearing in his own nature, saying, 'We will not have this man to rule over us.' Is it any wonder then, though the unbeliever be condemned already?

5. He is condemned already, because unbelief is *the spring and ringleader of all other sins*. Every sin is a turning away from the living God: and whence comes this, but from an evil heart of unbelief? Heb. iii. 12. The name of the sin of unbelief may be *Gad*, for a troop doth follow it. Why are men proud? why are their hearts lifted up within them, as if they were rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing? Why, the reason is, they do not believe the verdict of the Spirit of God concerning them, that they are indeed wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Why are men covetous? why have they the world set in their hearts, but because they do not believe that Christ is a better good than this world and the things of it? Why are men uncharitable to the poor, but because they do not believe that what is given to the poor is lent to the Lord, and that he will pay it again? Why are men secure in a way of sin, crying, Peace, peace, but because they do not believe that wrath and destruction from the Lord is pursuing them? Why is the blessed Bible so much slighted and neglected by many, like an almanack out of date, but because they do not believe it to be the word of God, or that eternal life is found therein? Why do people generally hear us, who are ministers, preaching the everlasting gospel, with such wandering hearts and careless ears, but because they do not believe that we are ambassadors for Christ, and that God doth beseech them by us to be reconciled unto him? Why do many live in the neglect of prayer? Why are they so formal, heartless, and careless in prayer, but because they do not believe God to be the hearer of prayer? Why are there so many hypocrites, contenting themselves with a show of religion, but because they do not believe there is a

reality in religion, and that God searches the heart, and tries the reins? Why do men remain under the power of natural enmity, but because they do not believe that God is love, 1 John iv. 16. and that, through the ransom he hath found, he bears a hearty good-will toward them? Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Whence comes that flood of profanity, which, like Jordan, has overrun all banks and bounds in our day, such as cursing, swearing, cheating, lying, Sabbath-breaking, thefts, robberies, forgeries, and the like abominations? Why, the plain reason is, they do not believe there is a God, or that ever they shall stand before his tribunal to answer for the deeds done in the body. The plain language of the heart of unbelief is, 'The Lord doth not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard;' and therefore they give themselves loose reins in a way of sin.

To conclude, unbelief is the *principal pillar of the devil's kingdom in the world*, and in the soul of man. Let this pillar be but broken, and all his strong-holds go to ruin. Faith is the radical grace, which gives life and spirit to all the other graces; it is the spring of all true gospel obedience, therefore called *the obedience of faith*; so, in like manner, unbelief is the radical sin, which gives life and spirit unto all vicious habits and acts of disobedience in the life and conversation. Faith is a shield that beats back the fiery darts of Satan; so unbelief is a shield that beats back all the good motions of the Spirit of God. Faith is the victory whereby we overcome the world; unbelief is the victory whereby the world overcomes us. After all, is it any wonder though such a severe sentence pass against the unbelieving sinner, as that in my text, *He that believeth not, is condemned already?*

IV. The fourth and last thing proposed, was the application, which I shall endeavour to discuss in a few inferences.

Inf. 1. See hence a very relevant reason, why *ministers of the gospel do insist so much upon the subject of faith or believing*. Why, it is for unbelief, that sinners are condemned already; and there is no way to free them from

this sentence, but by bringing them to believe in the Son of God. Unbelief is the main pillar of the devil's kingdom; and therefore the main batteries of the gospel must be raised against it. It is but at best a foolish ignorant cavil of some against ministers, Why so much insisting upon faith? are not other things as necessary to be preached? I answer, Other things are necessary in their own place, but faith or believing in the first place: and till we bring you to believe we do nothing at all, this being the laying the foundation of all religion; and, you know, it is foolish to think or speak of rearing up a superstructure, till the foundation be once laid. Can we ever make you accepted of God without faith in his Son? No, sure, 'Without faith it is impossible to please him:' we are 'justified by faith without the works of the law.' Can we ever make you the members of Christ without faith? No, this is the very bond of the soul's union with him; 'Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.' Can we ever make you the children of God who are by nature the children of wrath, without faith? No, 'We are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' It is to them who *receive him that he gives power or privilege to become the sons of God*, John i. 12. Let us press and inculcate the duties of holiness with never such flourishing harangues of rhetoric, we shall never make you holy, till we once land you in Christ by faith, he being the fountain and root of holiness; therefore said to be 'made of God unto us sanctification.' In one word, whatever duties we inculcate upon you, we only call you to build castles in the air, to build a tower without a bottom, unless we first bring you to Christ by that faith which is of God's operation.

Inf. 2. See hence *the miserable and mournful condition of the generality of gospel hearers*; they are a company of condemned men, under sentence of death. O that God may dart home an arrow of conviction on the hearts of unbelieving sinners, and persuade them of the truth of my doctrine, that every unbeliever is condemned already. I am sure it is true, whether you believe it or not; and you shall

find it to be so, sooner or later. O Sirs! here is a handwriting against you, that may make the joints of your loins to loose, and your knees to smite one against another; HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY. And, that I may, if possible, awaken you to some serious thought and concern about this matter, will you consider whose sentence it is? It is none other than God's sentence of condemnation. It is somewhat awful and terrible, to be arraigned and condemned at the bar of man; what then must it be to be condemned at JEHOVAH'S bar? The Judge is omniscient; his eyes are as a flame of fire; he setteth our secret sins in the light of his countenance, so that the crime cannot be concealed from him: his justice is unbiassed; his eye cannot be blinded with bribes: the arm of his power cannot be stayed from the execution of the sentence. What a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of this living God? He is indeed *a consuming fire*. The solemnity of the bench adds to the terror of the criminal; and you may see with what solemnity the bench is to be reared, before which you and I must stand ere long, Matth. xxv. 31, 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.' O! whither will the unbeliever fly for help? or where will he leave his glory at that day? If hills and mountains could cover him, he would choose far rather to be buried under them, than appear before the face of the Lamb, when he comes on his circuit as the universal Judge of all the earth. You may read your doom, Matth. xxv. 41, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' The sentence being passed, there can be no stop in the execution; the Judge will have his officers at hand, an innumerable host of angels, all ready for this service: these reapers shall gather the tares, bind them in bundles, and burn them. The Judge will stand and see the sentence executed before his face, saying, 'Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me,' Luke xix. 27. Among all the innumerable

multitudes of angels, men, and devils, who shall be spectators of the righteous execution, there shall be no eye to pity; and the reason is, because the sinner wilfully, through unbelief, slighted Christ the only Saviour, and refused to accept of pardon and redemption through his blood. Who will pity the traitor, who dies for his treason, rejecting his prince's pardon presented to him to the last; Christ would have gathered you, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not; and therefore ye must die without pity, and without remedy.

Inf. 3. See hence how *ill-grounded the joy and triumph of a Christless unbelieving world is*. We would think that man beside himself, who, being under sentence of death, and to be brought forth in a little unto the place of execution, would spend any little time he has, in eating, drinking, dancing, and revelling. Yet this is the very case with the generality; they take up the timbrel and harp, rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth and ease, without ever thinking, that they are condemned already by the great God. All I shall say, to stop your career at present, is this; *The triumphing of the unbelieving sinner is short, and his joy but for a moment*. You may indeed 'kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks: but this shall ye have of the Lord's hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow,' Isa. l. 11.

Inf. 4. See hence, that it is *every man's duty and interest to examine and try, whether he be under this heavy sentence, yea, or not*. It is a miserable thing to be under sentence of death, and to know nothing of it. Neither will a man ever seek to be freed from it, till he be convinced that he is indeed under it. I shall give you the few following characters of such as are under sentence of condemnation.

1st. You who *never yet saw yourselves to be condemned* in the court of law and conscience for sin, and particularly for the sin of unbelief, you are surely under sentence of death to this day; for the first work of the Spirit, when he comes to liberate a poor soul from condemnation, is to

‘convince the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not on him,’ John xvi. 8, 9.

2dly. You whose minds are so blinded with ignorance and prejudice against Christ, that *you can see no form or comeliness in him*, notwithstanding of the bright displays of his glory that are made to us in the word, you are ‘condemned already.’ ‘If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,’ 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

3dly. You who are *yet wedded to the law as a covenant*, and are seeking life and righteousness by that first husband, you are to this moment under the sentence of death; for ‘as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.’ If you never knew what it is to be dead to the law by the body of Christ, to have as little hope of life and salvation by the law and its works, as though you had never done any one duty commanded by the law in your whole life, you are yet married to the law as a husband, consequently under the law’s sentence. Yea, I will adventure to say, that the legalist, or self-righteous person, is a step farther off from heaven and eternal life, than the grossest of sinners; for ‘publicans and harlots,’ says Christ, ‘shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you.’

4thly. You who *cast off the obligation of the law as a rule of obedience*, under a pretended hope of being saved by grace, without the works of the law, are still under sentence of death. All practical Antinomians, who are following the swing of their own lusts, are under the power of unbelief, and consequently condemned already. Away with lying, swearing, drinking, whoring believers. Will you pretend to be the people of a holy God, the members of a holy Jesus, the federates of a holy covenant, the heirs of an undefiled inheritance, and yet wallow in your sins, or yet retain any known iniquity in your hearts? No, no. To such, not I, but God himself saith, ‘What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou

shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.' O Sirs, they that are dead to the law as a covenant, they are so far from casting off its obligation as a rule of duty, that they bind it about them as an ornament, choosing it for a light to their feet, and a lamp to their paths. We are not without law to God, when under the law to Christ. The law is so dear and sweet to a true believer, that it is his meditation day and night. 'O how love I thy law!' says David: as if he had said, I love it so well, that I cannot tell how well I love it: 'My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times,' Psal. cxix. 20.

Inf. 5. Is it so that every unbeliever is a condemned criminal before God? O then, Sirs, be *concerned at your hearts to get rid of that dismal sentence you are under*. What can be matter of concern if this be not? I come, in the name of God, to tell you, that this is not impossible; yea, I dare go further, and tell you, that if you will but *hear, your souls shall live*, and not die under that condemnatory sentence which is gone forth against you. I dare promise you not only a reprieve, but a remission; for thus saith the great Judge, as a reconciled God in Christ, to the poor trembling pannel, standing condemned before the bar of his holy law, 'I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,' Isa. xliii. 25. Here is an act of grace passed at a throne of grace, sealed with the blood of the Lamb, published and proclaimed in the tops of the high places, that none may pretend ignorance, and that every condemned sinner may take the benefit thereof, and come in upon the king's royal indemnity, granted upon the satisfaction made to justice by his eternal Son. O then, Sirs, 'Hear, and your souls shall live, and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David,' Isa. lv. 3. 'O earth, earth, earth, hear this word of the Lord.'

I come not to tell you how you may be rich, great, and honourable in the world; these things are but trifles to

people in your circumstances. Should you come to a condemned man, and talk to him of riches, honours, crowns, robes, sceptres, kingdoms: Alas! would he be ready to say, what is all that to me? I am a poor man going into another world within a few hours; if you can tell me how I may save my life, or how I may get rid of my sentence, chains, prison, you will say something to the purpose. This is the very case with thee, O sinner; for 'by the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation.' And therefore, O poor criminal, listen, lend me a believing ear for a few moments, and I will tell thee how infallibly thou shalt make thy escape.

Quest. O, may the poor criminal say, how is that? I answer, I have no advice to give thee but one; it is an old advice, a new advice, and the only advice that can be given while the world stands; it is the very same which Paul and Silas gave to a poor pannel, trembling at God's bar, crying, 'What must I do to be saved?' The plain advice they gave him, I give this day to you, Acts xvi. 3, 1, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:' agreeable to which are the words of Christ himself, in the first part of the verse where my text lies, 'He that believeth on the Son of God, is not condemned:' and ver. 16, 'Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.'

Quest. You advise us to believe in Christ, but pray tell us, what is it to believe in him? You have the answer in your Catechism: To believe, is to 'receive Christ, and to rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel;' or, in other words, it is to trust and credit him, as the Saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy lost soul, upon the warrant of his own call and command in the word. Christ's business and occupation is to save that which was lost. Now, you all know what it is to trust a man in his trade and occupation; you who have some business at law, know what it is to trust your advocates with your most valuable concerns, and the whole management of your cause depending before the judges. Well, in like manner, to believe, is, upon the credit of

God's testimony concerning Christ in the word, to trust him, as the Saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy own soul in particular. This, I say, is the business, the office, and occupation of Christ, to save sinners; and he is so fond of employment in his trade of saving, that he says, 'Come to me who will, I will in no wise cast out.' And therefore trust in him in his occupation; put thy condemned soul in the hand of the sinner's Saviour, for that is to believe in him and on him. O what a happy suitable meeting is it, when the sinner and the Saviour of sinners thus meet together! Some have a notion, when we bid them believe, we bid them do some great thing as the condition of salvation. But this is a mistake. Believing is a resting from works in point of salvation, and a resting on Christ alone for salvation from sin, and all the effects of it. It is to receive a salvation already completed and prepared to your hand, and brought near to you in the word of grace. But I must not stand further in describing faith at present.

Quest. What influence (may you say) will our believing have upon our being delivered from this condemnatory sentence we are under? Ans. Much every way. For,

1. That moment thou believest, *thou becomest a member of Christ*, as a new covenant head. While under the power of unbelief, thou art a member of the first Adam, and consequently under Adam's covenant, which is a cursing and condemning covenant to all who are under it, 'judgment being come upon all men to condemnation,' through Adam's breach of it; but in believing, thou becomest a member of Christ, the second Adam, the head of the new covenant, the covenant of grace and promise, which contains nothing but blessings to the soul that takes hold of it, Rom. viii. 1, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' It is not said, there is nothing culpable or condemnable in the believer; but there is no condemnation to him; he is no more liable to the penalties of Adam's covenant, Christ, his glorious Surety, having endured these in his room and stead; and

it were inconsistent with justice, to demand payment of the same debt, both from the cautioner and principal debtor.

2. To clear this yet further, the poor soul, in believing, *is married unto a new husband, even Christ*; and being under his roof, the covert of his blood and righteousness, the condemning law can have no action against it, this new and better husband having made his spouse free indeed, by the imputation of his law-magnifying righteousness: Rom. vii. 4, 'Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ (or, by the offering of his body on the cross), that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.' He does that for us, which the law could not do, through the corruption of nature; particularly, 'condemns sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' And if the law have its end, and be fulfilled in the believer, by virtue of his union and marriage with the Son of God, how can he be liable to condemnation, or any law penalties?

3. That moment the condemned sinner believes in Christ, *he is entered heir of a new family*, a member of a new corporation: he is come, not to mount Sinai, but to mount Zion; not to the earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage, but to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is free. He is 'no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.' He comes in among the 'general assembly, and church of the first-born.' He becomes an 'heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ;' and the inheritance is settled upon him by a charter, which contains no irritant clauses. No, no; *having taken hold of God's covenant, by faith, he hath a name and a place within the walls of God's house, even an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off*; and therefore must needs be free from the condemnatory sentence he lay under before he believed.

4. That moment you believe, *your cause is carried into a new court*; I mean, from a tribunal of justice to a mercy-

seat, where all the acts and interlocutors that pass are acts of grace and mercy, acts of pardon and acceptance in the beloved. No sentences of condemnation pass in the court of grace: no, this is inconsistent with the nature of the court. O let every guilty sinner, who finds himself condemned in the court of the law, and of conscience, carry his cause, by a solemn appeal, unto this court; for the court is open to all comers, and the Lord merciful and gracious, who sits upon this throne of grace, receives all appeals that are made to him, and will in no wise cast out the sinner, or cast his appeal over bar. O, therefore, 'let us come with boldness unto a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.'

Quest. But (may you say) if matters stand thus with a believer, that he cannot fall under the sentence of the law, cannot come into condemnation, then he may live as he lists. Does not this doctrine open a wide door for licentiousness and profanity? for if once a man be a believer, according to this doctrine, he has nothing to fear, and so may do what he will. Were it not better for ministers to forbear doctrines that are liable to such abuse? I answer,

1. The whole counsel of God must be revealed, and not one iota of divine truth must be suppressed, though a whole reprobate world should break their necks on it, by wresting it to their own destruction. The gospel will be the savour of death unto some; Christ crucified will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. But shall we, because of this, forbear to preach Christ, and his gospel? God forbid; we must not starve God's children, out of fear lest dogs snatch at it to their own perdition.

2. I own, that a carnal professor, who has some swimming notions of the grace of God in his head, may abuse the doctrine of the believer's freedom from condemnation, by virtue of his union with Christ; but the grace of God in the heart teaches the very reverse of this, namely, to 'deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'

3. Though the believer be delivered from the law as a covenant, and its condemnatory sentence, through Christ, yet it does not in the least pave a way to licentiousness; because at the same time that he is assolized and acquitted from his obligation to the law as a covenant, he comes under stronger and more powerful ties than ever to yield obedience to it as a rule of duty.

I shall conclude this discourse, by naming a few of these bonds of obedience the believer remains under, even when delivered from condemnation.

1st. He is still under *the bond of the royal authority* of the great God, both as a Creator and Redeemer. The authority and obligation of the divine law can never be dissolved, while God is God, and the creature a creature.

2dly. He is under *the bond of interest* to obey the divine law. It is true, his obedience does not give him the title to the reward of glory; it is only his union with Christ, the heir of all things, that gives him this; but yet his own personal obedience is evidential and declarative of his title through Christ. And is it not much for the believer's interest, to have his claim to glory and everlasting life cleared up and made evident to his own soul? In this sense I understand that word, Rev. xxii. 14, 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'

3dly. He is still under *the bond of fear*: Jer. xxxii. 40, 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' This is not a slavish fear of hell and vindictive wrath, for that is inconsistent with his freedom from condemnation; but it is a filial fear of God as a Father, flowing from an affectionate regard unto his authority, interposed in the commands of the law. Though they be not afraid of being cast into hell; yet they 'fear him who is able to cast soul and body into hell.' Though they have no reason to fear him as a revenging and condemning Judge; yet they have much reason to fear him as a fatherly Judge, lest he 'visit their transgressions with

the rod, and their iniquity with stripes?' for, pass who will unpunished, they shall not pass: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.'

4thly. He is under *the bond of love*. He studies to love the Lord his God, with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind; and this love of God in Christ, like a strong cord, draws him on in the way of obedience; 'I drew them with the cords of love:' 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' says Paul. This love laid in the believer's heart, has such a force and power with it, 'that many waters cannot quench it, neither are all floods able to drown it,' Cant. viii. 7. Rom. viii. 35, 39.

5thly. He is under *the bond of gratitude*: being bought with a price, he studies to glorify God in soul and body, which are his. Christ having delivered him from the hand of his enemies, he serves the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of his life. The believer, when delivered from the hand of the condemning law, says to Christ, as the men of Israel did to Gideon, Judg. viii. 22, 'Rule thou over us; for thou hast delivered us from the hand of our enemies.' Suppose a king should not only pardon a rebel, but restore him his forfeited inheritance, advance him to the highest places of honour about the throne; yea, make him his son, his heir, and set him upon the throne with himself; would not that man be under a far greater obligation to serve and obey the king, than if he had never received such singular favours at his hand? There is no bond of obedience like the bond of gratitude to an ingenuous spirit.

6thly. He is under *the bond of a renewed nature*. The man is made a partaker of the divine nature, whereby the life of God, the love of God, and the law of God, is laid in his very heart; and this is a mighty bond to obedience: Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.' It is engraven there with the finger of the Holy Ghost: his heart is cast into a divine mould, moulded into the will of God, his will of grace, his

will of precept, and his will of providence: so that he 'delights in the law of God after the inward man.' 'The law of his God is in his heart,' and therefore 'none of his steps shall slide.'

Lastly, *The inhabitation of the Holy Ghost is another efficacious bond to obedience*: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' This law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, makes them 'free from the law of sin and death.' And being *led by the Spirit*, they do not *fulfil the lusts of the flesh*. To conclude, that very grace of God which frees them from the law as a covenant, binds them to it as a rule, Tit. ii. 11, 12.

These are some gospel bonds of obedience: and you who never knew what it is to have your souls under the sweet influence of these, but only obey the law with a view to purchase a title to heaven, or to redeem your souls from hell and wrath, I, in the name of God, pronounce the heavy doom of my text against you, *He that believeth not, is condemned already*.

SERMON XII.

THE STONE REJECTED BY THE BUILDERS.

The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head stone of the corner.—Psal. cxviii. 22.

(*Preached before the Synod of Perth and Stirling, Oct. 10, 1732.*)

It is probable this psalm was penned by David when the ark of God was brought up from the house of Obed-edom, to its proper place in Jerusalem, after the intestine broils between the house of David and Saul had happily issued in David's promotion, by the common consent of all the tribes to the crown and kingdom of Israel. But though this was the occasion, yet the Spirit of God had in it a further view, namely, to Christ himself, of whom David and his administrations were but a faint type and shadow.

David's accession to the throne was through many storms of opposition, for although God had chosen and ordained him for the kingdom and government; yet he was opposed by the house of Saul, and them who adhered to that family; but after all the house of David prevailed. Just so was it with the son of David, our glorious Redeemer: hell and earth combined against the Lord and his Messiah, but God had determined that the government should be upon his shoulders, that his king should be set upon his holy hill of Zion; and he carries his design against all opposers, as you see in my text, *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head stone of the corner.*

I need not stay to prove that these words are to be understood of Christ, after the express application that is made of them to him by himself and his apostles in the scriptures of the New Testament, Matth. xxi. 42. Acts iv. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Eph. ii. 20.

In the words we may notice the following particulars, (1.) The metaphorical view in which the church is here represented, namely, that of a house or building. (2.) The character that our Immanuel bears with respect to this building; he is *the stone* in a way of eminence, without whom there can be no building, no house for God to dwell in among the children of men. (3.) The character of the workmen employed in this spiritual structure, they are called *builders*. (4.) A fatal error they are charged with in building of the house of God; they *refuse* the stone of God's choosing; they do not allow him a place in his own house. (5.) Notice the place that Christ should and shall have in this building, let the builders do their worst, he *is made the head stone of the corner*. The words immediately following declare how this is effected, and how the saints are affected with the views of his exaltation, notwithstanding of the malice of hell and earth, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes.'

In discoursing of this subject, I shall just follow the order of the text now laid down, by explaining the particulars named, and then deduce a few inferences from the whole.

I. Let us take a view of the church under the notion of a *house* or *building*. This metaphorical view of the church is very frequent in the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament. Isa. ii. 2, 3, 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains.—And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.' The same way of speaking occurs also in the scriptures of the New Testament, 1. Cor. iii. 9, 'Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.' Hence Paul writing to Timothy,

directs him how to behave himself in the church of God, which is the house of the living God.

Now, with relation to this house or building, I offer the following particulars.

1. That though God took up house with man at his creation, yet by the fall of Adam *the family was scattered*. God broke up house with man, the family was parted, and the breach was wide like the sea. God could have no fellowship with man; for what fellowship could there be betwixt light and darkness, betwixt God and Belial? And immediately man like the prodigal forsook God, and wandered into a far country of sin and vanity.

2. God had a *stated design from eternity*, that notwithstanding of this breach, he would have a house and dwelling with fallen man. He designed to take up house, and gather the family again; hence we are told, that 'before the foundation of the earth, he rejoiced in the habitable parts thereof, and his delights were with the sons of men.' The foundation of this building was laid in the council of peace, and all the stones and materials of it were sequestered and set apart. From the ancient years of eternity Christ was chosen as the foundation and the chief cornerstone: 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.' And all the saints were elected as living stones, to be renewed, justified, adopted, sanctified, and eternally saved in him and through him: Eph. i. 3—5, 'He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world; he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.'

3. Before this designed building could go up, *heaven must be at an infinite expense*. Before one stone could be laid in the building, the glory of the infinite God must be veiled with a veil of flesh in the person of the eternal Son, the great Lawgiver must be made under his own law, God blessed for ever must be made a curse, and the Holy One of God made sin. Justice had determined, that 'without the shedding of blood there *should be* no remission of sin;'

and except justice was satisfied, and the honour of the law repaired, God could never dwell upon honourable terms with man upon earth. Oh, the expense that God is at in building this house! We must be redeemed from the hand of justice, 'not with silver and gold, or such corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ,' &c.

4. Every stone of this building *is digged out of the deep and dark quarry of nature*, being 'dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath even as others, alienated from the life of God through ignorance, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise;' in a word, there is not worse stuff in hell itself, than the stones of this building are by nature. And who can quarrel with the great Builder for taking one stone out of the quarry, and leaving another behind him as he has a mind? Only when we look to the rock whence we were hewn, and the pit whence we were digged, we may say, 'Who made *us* to differ? for a Syrian ready to perish was *our* father.'

5. The great engine the glorious Builder makes use of for gathering the stones of the building, and carrying on the edifice, *is the pure preaching of the everlasting gospel*. This is what the prophet, Isa. xxvii. 13, foretells, 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish, in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.' It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. It is the gospel that is 'the power of God unto salvation;' for 'therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith,' Rom. i. 16, 17. When Christ sent forth his apostles and ministers, as founders of the New Testament church, what were they to do? Their commission was, to go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven: 'Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Hence the apostle declares, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of

strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

6. The church thus gathered and united under Christ as a glorious head, *is the house of God, or his family upon earth.* He has a manifold right unto her; a right by election, a right by redemption and purchase, a right by covenant and possession.

II. The second thing proposed was, to speak a little here of the character given unto Christ, with relation to this building; he is *the stone.* There are a great many stones in a building; but in this spiritual building of the house of God, Christ is *the stone*, in a way of eminence and excellency, as if the whole building were of one piece, intimating, that Christ and his church are so closely united as to become one body and one spirit. Upon this account the whole building is called by the name of *Christ*, as the principal part thereof, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 'As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.' So Jer. xxxiii. 16,—'And this is the name wherewith she shall be called,' viz., the church, *The Lord our Righteousness*; the very name given unto Christ himself, chap. xxiii. 6. I conceive that Christ is called the stone here, for the same reason that he elsewhere calls himself a rock, 'Upon this rock will I build my church,' to intimate that he is the strength and stability of his church. Now, the excellency and necessity of this stone, to the rearing and building of the house of God, will appear, if we consider,

1. That he is the stone of *God's choosing*: 1 Pet. ii. 4, 'Chosen of God and precious.' Isa. xlii. 1, 'Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. Foreordained before the foundation of the world.'

2. He is the stone of *God's approbation.* Though he be *disallowed of men*, he had his Father's testimony from heaven with an audible voice, 'This is my beloved Son,

in whom I am well pleased.' And as he is approved of God, so he is approved of by every wise builder. They will be ready to say with Paul, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'

3. He is the stone of *God's trying*: Isa. xxviii. 16, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a tried stone.' He was tried in the furnace of his Father's wrath, and he abode the trial; for he came forth more glorious than ever, in his resurrection from the dead. He stood the trial of the rage of men and devils, who endeavoured to stop him in his redeeming work. All the saints in heaven, and all believers on earth, have tried him, and will give him this testimony, that 'he is able to save to the uttermost.'

4. He is the *only living and life-giving stone*, 1 Pet. ii. 4, 'To whom coming, as unto a living stone. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' He is 'the resurrection and the life;' and all the stones of the building derive their life from him: 1 Peter ii. 5, 'Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house. He that hath the Son, hath life. Our life is hid with Christ in God.'

5. He is the stone that is laid by the hand of JEHOVAH as a *foundation in Zion*: 'Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation,' Isa. xxviii. 16. He was laid decretively from eternity; he is laid doctrinally and declaratively in a preached gospel; and he is laid efficaciously in a day of power, when the sinner is, by the power of the eternal Spirit, determined to take hold upon him by faith. He is laid a foundation, and the only foundation of hope and help for perishing sinners. Men have been trying in all ages to lay other foundations, but still they have proven foundations of sand: 'another foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' They who attempt to rear a church without Christ, or to build up to themselves a hope of salvation without him, have only built castles in the air, and their building has always turned to nought.

6. He is the matchless and incomparable stone, for he is *the chief stone of the corner*; the brightness of his Father's glory is in him, and the express image of his person. All created glory shrinks into nothing and darkness, when he appears; for he is 'fairer than the children of men, as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood:' and he casts a lustre and glory on the whole building, and every stone in it, for we are 'beautiful through his comeliness;' the beauty of the Lord is upon his saints.

III. The third thing to be discoursed of a little, was the workmen employed in rearing this spiritual building or fabric of the church, here called *builders*. Christ himself is the principal builder to whom the work is committed; Zech. vi. 12, 13, 'Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.' But he employs officers under him for the carrying on of the work, and these are called *builders*. Kings, and those in civil authority, when in their sphere they lend their helping hand to advance and carry on the work of God, may be called builders of the church. But under the New Testament I find this term applied only to ministers of the gospel, ordinary or extraordinary. Eph. iv. 11, 12, 'He gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers.' For what end? It is *for the edification of the church*, or building the body of Christ: and 1 Cor. iii. 10. Paul declareth there, that 'according to the grace given *him, he*, as a wise master builder, had laid the foundation.' So that ministers of the gospel are especially the New Testament builders.

Now, with relation to these, there are only these few things I suggest.

1. It is a very *honourable* employment to be a builder of the house of God. It is an employment wherein the Son of God as Mediator is engaged; and is it not an honour to be co-workers with him? David esteemed it an honour to be a door-keeper in the house of our God: but it is yet

more so to be a builder of the house. And as the work is honourable, so the reward of grace is proportioned; for, if we keep the charge committed to us in building the house of God, we shall have place among them that stand by the heavenly throne. 'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.'

2. None can warrantably lay a stone in this building *except he be regularly called*. What mason will put his hand to a building unless he be employed by those who have warrant to call him? This is such a necessary circumstance, that Christ himself would not meddle with building his Father's house till he had his Father's call. 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron: so also Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high-priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee,' Heb. v. 4, 5. There is a twofold call necessary for a man who meddles as a builder in the church of God; there is the call of God, and of the church. God's call consists in his qualifying a man for the work, and inspiring him with a holy zeal and desire to employ those qualifications for the glory of God and the good of his church. The call of the church lies in the free choice and election of the Christian people. The promise of conduct and counsel in the choice of men that are to build the church, is not made to patrons, heritors, or any other particular set of men; but to the church, the body of Christ, to whom apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given. As it is a natural privilege of every house or society of men, to have the choice of their own servants or officers, so it is the privilege of the house of God in a particular manner. What a miserable bondage would it be reckoned for any family to have stewards or servants imposed upon them by strangers or enemies, who might give the children of the family a 'stone for bread, or a scorpion instead of a fish,' and poison instead of a medicine? And shall we suppose, that ever God granted to any set of men, patrons, heritors,

elders, or whatever they be, a power to impose servants on his family, without their consent, being the freest society in the world? But I pass this at present; perhaps more of it may occur afterwards.

3. The builders of the house of God are not left to form or mould the house according to their own fancy; no, but they must follow the pattern showed in the holy mount of divine revelation. When the tabernacle was reared, a platform of it was given to Moses; when the temple was to be built, a pattern of it was given to Solomon by his father; and every pin of the tabernacle, and every stone of the temple, was to be regulated and disposed according to the divine order. Now these were but types of the New Testament building, whereof we now speak. Who builds a house without forming a plan of it to the builder? Who erects a society without giving orders about its government? They who assert the government of the church to be ambulatory, cast a reflection on the wisdom of God, which is not to be supposed of any wise man whatever. Now, I say, as builders of a house must renounce their own schemes, and follow the orders of the owner, so ministers, and church officers, in building the house of God, must renounce carnal policy, and the wisdom of the world, and follow the orders given by God in his word, the perfect rule of faith and manners both to ministers and church members. What the particular model of the church should be, is a thing I hope beyond controversy amongst us, who are so solemnly engaged to maintain the doctrine, discipline, worship and government of this church; and therefore I do not enter upon it now.

4. God has *endowed men* whom he calls to build his house, with different talents and abilities, according to the different services they are to be employed about in the work. There are a great variety of gifts bestowed by Christ upon his ministers, all calculated for the good of the church of God in general: the apostle illustrates this argument at great length, 1 Cor. xii. through the whole of the chapter. If this were but duly considered, it would cure all manner

of strife and emulation among the builders, that they should not grudge one against another.

5. The gifts of men, however edifying or well adapted for carrying on the work, will never do service *without the blessing and countenance* of the great Master builder. 'Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase:' and it is well that it is so ordered of Infinite Wisdom, that men may not give greater glory to instruments than is due, and that the whole glory may redound to the Lord; for this end he 'puts the treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of him.'

6. The work of God is many times *exceedingly marred*, through the *weakness* or wickedness of pretended builders. But this leads me to,

IV. The fourth thing proposed, which was, to speak of the fatal error of these builders spoken of in my text; they *reject* the stone, without which their whole building was nothing but a medley of confusion, however glorious it might appear in their own eyes: *The stone is rejected by the builders.*

They seemed to have a great zeal for the Messiah and his kingdom; yet when he comes, they do not allow him a room in his own house: 'He came unto his own, and his own received him not;' and so they fulfilled Isaiah's prediction of him, Isa. liii. 2, 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men.' And because they rejected him, he hath rejected them as a church and nation; and, O happy had it been, if their error and ruin thereupon, had served as a beacon to other churches since their day, not to dash upon the same rock! But here a question naturally arises.

How did the Jewish builders reject the stone which God hath ordained to be the chief stone of the corner? Ans. This came about through a great many corruptions which they introduced, both in principle and practice. I shall only name a few of them, and leave it to every one to judge how far such evils or corruptions are to be found in our own day.

1. Though they pretended a *great regard unto the holy law* of God, and cried out upon Christ and his apostles as enemies to it; yet they narrowed and contracted the sense and meaning of it, confining it merely to the letter, without searching into its extent and spirituality, which gave occasion unto Christ's sermon on the mount. By these means, though their hearers might have some notions of moral honesty, yet could they have no notion of the deprivation of nature, and of the deceit and desperate wickedness of their hearts, without which no man can ever know the need he has of the work of regeneration, or of a Saviour from sin.

2. Having pared off the spiritual meaning of the law, *they sought justification by the works thereof*, and thought a man's own personal obedience enough to recommend him to God; as is clear from Rom. ix. 31, 32, 'Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.' And Rom. x. 3, 'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.' They could frame no notion to themselves of justification by the imputed righteousness of the Messiah, though God had told them that their righteousness and their works could not profit them, that it was a bed too short, and a covering too narrow for them.

3. These builders, through the legality of their doctrine, *shut up the kingdom of heaven against men*. They would neither enter themselves, nor suffer others that were entering to enter. God had told them that the blessings of his covenant must be had without money, or price; but they would needs pawn their legal qualifications upon God, and barter the matter with him: and thus, instead of casting out the stones, or preparing the way of the people, Isa. lxi. 10. they threw stones and stumbling-blocks in the way of the salvation of sinners by the Messiah.

4. These builders *deadened the ordinances of God* by their formality. Though they retained the shell of ordinances they never regarded the end, either with respect to their own souls, or the souls of their people, which was fellowship and communion with God therein; for which reason God declareth his abhorrence of his own institutions, Isa. i. 11, 12, &c. 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats,' &c. One of the great sources of this evil was, that if a man had been trained up at the feet of Gamaliel for a few years, and got a smack of the learning then in vogue, it was enough in their opinion to qualify him for being a builder in the house of God, though in the mean time he was an utter stranger to the work of God on his soul; as is evident from the instance of Nicodemus, who, when Christ tries him upon the head of regeneration, babbles and speaks nonsense. John iii. 4, 'How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' Hence is that sharp challenge, ver. 10, 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' There Christ speaks of it as a thing criminal, that men should be made teachers of the church, who were strangers to a work of grace; for what but dead formal worship could be performed by men 'dead in trespasses and sins?'

5. They were continually *dabbling in politics*, and gave themselves up to the conduct of carnal wisdom and policy in the matters of God and of his church; and through this carnal wisdom, they were led on to crucify the Lord of glory. 'It is expedient that one man die for the people: and if he be not taken out of the way, the world will go after him; and so the Romans shall come and take away our kingdom.' When once a church comes to stand upon the rotten prop of carnal wisdom and policy, she is near unto ruin. It is true, ministers are to be wise as serpents; but the wisdom of the serpent will soon lead us off

our feet unto pernicious courses, if not attended with the simplicity of the dove; and therefore we need, 'that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we should have our conversation in this world.'

6. The Jewish builders *valued themselves exceedingly upon their connexion with the rulers and great folk in that day*; and having joined interests with them, treated the common people, especially those who owned Christ, and attended his ministry and that of his apostles, as an unhallowed mob; as is clear from John vii. from ver. 45. and downward, where they having sent some of their officers to apprehend Christ, the officers return, declaring that 'never man spake like this man;' to which the Pharisees reply, 'Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.' As if the common people had been obliged to follow them, and the rulers with whom they connect themselves, by an implicit faith and obedience, without ever bringing their doctrine and actions to the bar of the law and testimony to be tried there.

7. They and the rulers having got the ascendant in the sanhedrim, and other courts, *they took care to keep the power upon their side*, by bringing in none but men of their own stamp and spirit. And if any man adventured to open his mouth, or testify against their corruptions in principle or practice, presently combinations are formed, plots are laid, and the edge of the church's discipline which they had grasped, is turned against him as a turbulent person, an enemy to the law and temple; as is clear from their management with Christ, his apostles, and the protomartyr Stephen. But yet, notwithstanding of their pretended regard to the temple, they admitted the buyers and sellers to enter into it, whereby they turned that holy place into a den of thieves, as Christ tells them to their face, John ii. 16. and Matth. xxi. 13. And whatever regard they pretended to the law, by a show of sanctity before the world, yet they abandoned themselves to all manner of secret and heart

wickedness: hence our Lord compares them unto *painted sepulchres*; glorious without, but within full of dead men's bones and rottenness, Matth. xxiii. 27.

8. Again, however careful they were to cloak and palliate their secret wickedness, yet now and then *it was breaking out*, to the great scandal and offence of the poor people of God; by which means they made themselves contemptible, and caused many to stumble at the law, and abhor the sacrifices of the Lord as administrated by them; as is plain from Mal. ii. 8, 9, 'Ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law: ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.'

9. Having lost the hearts of the people by these means, *they gave themselves up to all manner of sloth and indolence*, taking care to feed their own bellies, and enrich themselves with the good of this world, while in the meantime they entirely neglected the flock and heritage of God. Hence is that charge against them by the prophet, Isa. lvi. 10—12, 'His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.'

10. Those Jewish rulers *ruled the Lord's people with rigour*, invaded their freedoms and liberties, bound heavy burdens on them, which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers; by this means the Lord's people were scattered from the worship of God in their synagogues, as sheep having no shepherd. Hence is that plain dealing by the prophet, Ezek. xxxiv. 2—6, 'Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.'

In short, to such a degree of corruption were they arrived, that the holy and profane, *the clean and unclean, were alike to them*, provided they were of their way and party: Ezek. xxii. 25, 26, 'There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls: they have taken the treasure and precious things: they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated, (as in the original,) offered violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean.'

Thus, the Jewish church, and particularly her pretended builders, we see were sunk into the very dregs of corruption. And hence it came, that when the glorious and long looked for Messiah actually appeared among them, upon the stage of this world, instead of giving him a reception suitable to his excellency, as Immanuel, God-man, they treated him with the utmost contempt. Though he opened his commission, and made it evident to the world, by his doctrine, miracles, and the whole of his conversation, that he was none other than the brightness of his Father's glory, yet they disparaged his person, denied his supreme Deity, esteeming him only as the son of the carpenter, contradicted his doctrine, and studied to obscure his miracles, by

ascribing them to the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. They blackened his character with reproaches, as though he had been a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; and at length crucified him ignominiously, as though he had been a notorious impostor, betwixt two thieves. And when, after his resurrection from the dead, he came to them in the ministry of his apostles, bringing his righteousness and salvation near unto them, they finally rejected him, and all the offers of his grace; for which reason God was provoked, by a heavy sentence of excommunication, to cut them off from being a church or nation, under which they are lying to this day, his blood being upon them and upon their children, according to their wish at his crucifixion. And thus we see how the stone of God's choosing was rejected by the builders. Let their example and ruin serve as so many beacons, that we of the Gentile churches may not dash ourselves upon the same church ruining and soul destroying rocks, which is the very use the apostle Paul makes of this subject, when writing to the Romans, chap. xi. 20—23, 'Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.' Which melancholy event actually happened unto the church of Christ at Rome, as we see at this very day, it being now the seat of Antichrist, and a synagogue of Satan.

V. The fifth thing in the method was, to inquire what may be implied in Christ's being made the head stone of the corner, notwithstanding of the attempts of the builders to jostle him out of his place.

1. Then, it implies *Christ's exaltation and victory* over all his enemies and opposers; he will have the better of them, let them do their worst. However Christ and his cause, interest, and people, may be borne down for a while, yet

the scales will turn, and, like the house of David, they shall prevail. Christ was personally oppressed and afflicted, 'he drank of the brook in the way;' yet at length 'he lifted up the head, and God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name.' And as it was with Christ personal, so it will be with his injured members. However they be 'afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, yet God will lay their stones with fair colours, and their foundations with sapphires.' Though Sion may be laid in ashes, yet she shall be built up again by the almighty God; and when the Lord brings her forth to the light, then 'shame shall cover her who said, Where is the Lord thy God?'

2. It implies, that God has *a great regard for the glory of his Son*, as the head and king of his church; and that it is his will, 'that all men should honour him, even as they honour the Father.' This was intimated by a royal mandate, issued forth from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.' God does not reckon it any injury done to him as God Creator, that we worship and serve him in the person of the Redeemer, for 'his name is in him;' his glory, his majesty, and other excellent perfections, are in him as they are in the Father; and therefore it is his will, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

3. It implies, that *the whole spiritual fabric or building of the church hangs upon him*, as the superstructure leans upon the foundation and chief corner-stone. 'He shall build the temple, and bear the glory,' says the prophet Zechariah; and Isa. xxii. 24, 'They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house.' All the doctrines of the church and truths of the everlasting gospel lean upon him; he is their Alpha and Omega; hence we read of 'the truth as it is in Jesus;' they meet in him as the spokes of a wheel in the nave. All the promises meet in him, 'they are in him yea and amen.' All the precepts lean upon his authority; for the law is 'the law of Christ,' it is his 'yoke

and burthen.' The whole discipline of the church hangs upon him; the keys of doctrine and discipline hang at his girdle. The government of the church pertains to him; for it is laid upon his shoulders. The ordinances and worship of the church hang on him; no sort of worship, or a part of worship, can be admitted, but what bears the impression of his institution. The officers of the church hang upon him for their commission, and success in their work. In a word, all the members of the church hang upon him; 'the whole offspring and issue, the vessels of small quantity, from vessels of cups to vessels of flagons, hang on him, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place.'

4. His being made the head stone of the corner implies, that he is the *alone centre of unity* in the church; for the head stone of the corner knits the whole building together, and if that be removed, the walls of the house fall asunder, and so the whole fabric is ruined. If we do not hold the head stone of the corner, by which the whole building is supplied and knit together, the fabric of a church, however politically framed, can never stand long. And the reason why the house is tottering at this day, is because there is too much of receding from the corner-stone. Usually indeed, in a time of defection, the pulpits of those builders whose hands are deepest in it, ring with the doctrine of peace. And if a tongue be moved against the corrupt measures they are going into, the cry is raised, 'These that turn the world upside down, are come hither also.' While in the mean time it is such as depart from the corner-stone that ruin and tear the building, and not they who give warning to the house or family of its being in danger of falling. They who do give warning may lay their account to be beaten by their fellow-builders, that are leaving the corner-stone. But this needs be no surprise, for in all ages Christ's witnesses have tormented them that dwell upon the earth; and it needs be no discouragement, for though they may be killed and buried, yet there will be a resurrection both of names and persons.

5. His being the head stone of the corner implies, that

Christ is the beauty and ornament of his church; for much of the beauty and ornament of the building lies in the corner-stone. We are told, the daughters of Zion were 'like a corner-stone, polished after the similitude of a palace.' Christ is 'the glory of his people Israel:' and no wonder, for he is 'the brightness of his Father's glory.' When he is in the midst of his church, countenancing his ordinances and judicatories, then it is 'she looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;' but when he departs, all the glory departs, and a dismal Ichabod succeeds: 'Yea, woe also unto them when I depart from them;' as may be seen at this day in the once famous churches of Lesser Asia, and other places where Christ had once flourishing churches. They departed from the chief corner-stone, in doctrine, discipline, worship, and government, and this provoked him to depart; and upon his departure, the songs of their temples were turned into howlings.

6. It implies, that they who would build the church of Christ must *still have him in their eye*, and that the whole of their conduct and administration in the house of God must be regulated with a view to his glory and honour. If in building a house, the chief corner-stone be not kept in view, irregular work cannot miss to ensue. Just so is it in the case in hand; if we shall pretend to build the house of God; and do not keep our eyes on Christ, and his honour and interest, whether in matters of discipline or doctrine, instead of building the church, we do but disorder and disturb it, and throw all into confusion. When we begin to work by carnal policy, or to have a squint eye upon serving the lusts and humours of men, great or small, or our own worldly interests, and not the glory of our great Redeemer, we but ruin and pull down the church of Christ, instead of building it; and are fair to bury our name, our ministry, and our own souls, and the souls of multitudes, in the rubbish of it. Therefore there is much need of disinterested views in the management of the affairs of Christ. We that are ministers, as well as others,

have much need to learn the lesson of self-denial; to deny our own wisdom, and our worldly interest, as a trifle in respect of his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom.

7. The text implies, that *God and corrupt builders are driving quite different measures and designs.* The builders reject the stone, but God will have it to be the head stone of the corner; and which of the parties shall prevail, it is easy to judge. Christ shall sit at his Father's right hand, till all his enemies be made his footstool. He will break them that rise up against him as a potter's vessel. 'I have set my king, says the Lord, upon my holy hill of Zion;' and who is he that will dethrone him?

VI. What was last proposed in the method, was the application of the whole. All the use I shall make of what has been said, shall be wrapt up in the following inferences.

Inf. 1. From what has been said, we may *see the excellency of the church* of Christ; why, she is a building, an house for God to dwell in among the children of men. So valuable is this building, that this whole visible creation is only a theatre or scaffold for rearing the house; and whenever the building is completed, the scaffold will be taken down and committed to the flames. To discover the high estimate God puts upon his church, he calls her by the most endearing names and epithets. He designs her his *spouse*, his *love*, his *dove*, his *undefiled*, his *treasure*, his *portion*, his *Hephzibah*, and *Beulah*, his *bed*, his resting-place, his walking-place, and his dwelling-place. A whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, lay themselves out in their particular economy for the upbuilding of this house: the grace of the Father, the love and blood of the Son, and all the gracious influences and operations of the Holy Ghost, are laid out for carrying on the work.' The whole administrations of providence in the government of the world are adjusted for the benefit of the church, and the faithful members thereof. For this end the reins of administration, the keys of hell and death, were committed into the hands of Christ; for 'God hath given him to be

the head over all things to the church, which is his body.' The Father hath put all things into the hand of the Son, that so all the wheels of providence might be rolled and turned about 'for the good of them that love him, and who are the called according to his purpose.' The whole institution and administration of gospel ordinances, and all the officers of his ordination, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are designed for her edification, as we see in that forecited Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13, &c. This may let us see what a valuable trust we have among our hands, to whom God has committed the affairs of the church, and how tenderly it concerns us to manage them, even like those who are to make an account to the great Lord of the house.

Inf. 2. Is Christ *the stone* in a way of eminence? Then we may see how *necessary and useful it is to preach Christ*; why, he is *the stone* by way of eminence, the stone of God's laying, of his choosing, and the stone which God will have for *head stone of the corner*. Paul, as a wise master builder, laid this foundation among his hearers, and declares that, 'another foundation can no man lay.' It is 'Christ whom we preach.' 'I desire,' says he, 'to know nothing among you, but Christ, and him crucified.' The whole of the scripture revelation meets in him as its centre; all the histories, prophecies, promises, types, precepts, doctrines, and ordinances of the word, are just full of Christ. The whole Bible, what is it but the testament of Christ, and the testimonial that Christ brought from heaven? 'These are they which testify of me.' 'These things are written, that ye may believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in him.' And to be sure what is the scope of the whole revelation of the mind of God in the word, ought to be the scope and design of all our sermons. Whatever particular doctrines we insist upon, ought still to be grafted upon the blessed Branch that springs out of the root of Jesse; for the truth is only right dispensed, and right known as it is in Jesus. Hence the great Mr. Durham tells us, in his first

sermon on Isa. liii. that 'Christ stands under a fourfold relation to preaching. 1. He is the text of it. All preaching is to explain him; and that preaching that does not stand in relation to him, is a preaching besides the text. 2. He is the ground work and foundation of preaching. So that preaching without him wants a foundation, and is but building castles in the air. 3. He is the great end of preaching, namely, to set him on high in the hearts and affections of our hearers. This design of preaching is not to make ourselves, but our Master, great, to cause his name to be remembered. 4. He is the very power and life of preaching: for he is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God;" and the gospel is called "the power of God unto salvation, because therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith.'"—Thus far that great man.

Inf. 3. If the ministers of the gospel be builders of the house, then see hence *the need of trying a man's acquaintance with Christ* and the power of religion, before he is admitted unto ministerial communion, as a fellow-builder in the house of God. Why, that man who is not really acquainted with Christ in an experienced way, may be fair to reject the stone of God's choosing, and so ruin the building, and bury himself and many souls in the ruins of it. Masons know one another, they have certain signs and words by which they are capable to distinguish men of their own art and business from others; so skilful builders in the house of God are capable, by a spiritual discerning, to know who are fit for being admitted to the work of the Lord, and who not. If such a discerning be given, even unto church members, as to 'try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world,' 1 John iv. 1. much more may it be supposed that this discerning faculty is to be found among faithful ministers of the gospel. Hence is that of the apostle to Timothy, 2 Epist. ii. 2, 'The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.'

Inf. 4. Is it so that the stone is rejected by the builders? Then see hence *what a fatal and pernicious thing a corrupt, erroneous, and ignorant ministry is to the church of Christ*: why, they spoil, mar, and destroy the whole building; they run counter to the great plot of heaven, by casting away the stone which God has ordained to be the chief stone of the corner. The new mode of preaching some men have fallen into with their harangues and flourishes of morality, while Christ is scarce named, from the beginning to the end of their discourse, I look on as a plot of hell to throw out the corner-stone, in order to bring us back unto Heathenism or Antichristian darkness. Christ is 'the light of the world;' and if he be removed, or shuffled out, where are we, but just among the 'dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of horrid cruelty?' So that, I say, a corrupt ministry, whatever be their fine parts, are the very bane of the church of Christ.

Inf. 5. If it be God's great design, that Christ should be the chief stone of the corner; if this, I say, be the resolution of heaven; then, see hence, *that all the attempts of hell for the depressing of Christ and the ruin of his cause, whether by open enemies, or pretended builders, shall be abortive in the issue*; for 'the counsel of the Lord will stand, and he will do all his pleasure,' in spite of hell and earth. And what is his pleasure and counsel? Why, here it is, *The stone which the builders rejected, the same shall become the head stone of the corner*. The gates of hell have made many an attempt to get the stone of God's choosing rejected, in order to the ruin of the church; but they have never yet prevailed, and never shall: Infinite Wisdom hath always 'taken the wise in their own craftiness, and turned the counsel of the froward headlong,' and made these very devices of hell and its instruments subservient to lift the corner-stone higher in the building, to the shame and ruin of those who attempted to reject it. This 'little stone cut out of the mountain,' hath always proved too hard for all the metals that clashed with it, and it will be so to the end of time.

Inf. 6. See from what is said, what *it is makes a flourishing church*. It is not her external peace, plenty, or prosperity; not her connexion in politics with kings or parliaments, patrons, heritors, or any other sort of men; but her connexion with the chief corner-stone. This, and this only, is what beautifies the whole building, and makes her 'increase with the increase of God.'

Inf. 7. See hence great *ground of lamentation and humiliation at this day*. The stone is rejected, which God would have to be the chief stone of the corner. Is he not rejected in his prophetic office, through the prevailing ignorance and unbelief that is to be found among the hearers of the gospel? The old complaint may be still renewed in our day, 'Who hath believed our report?' Is he not rejected in his priestly office, while the generality with the Jews, 'go about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse the righteousness of God?' And is he not rejected in his kingly office and headship in his church, by the abounding profanity, atheism, and immorality of our day; the generality of professed Christians breaking his bands, and casting his cords from them? I cannot now stand to give a full narrative of these things, but the injuries that have been done to the royal prerogative of this King of kings, and Lord of lords, claim a more particular reference.

The Roman Antichrist has for a long time invaded the prerogative of the Son of God, by usurping a headship over the church: 'He sits in the temple of God exalting himself above all that is called God.' At the imperfect reformation of England, when they threw off the Pope as the head of the church, they lodged the same in the King, declaring him to be supreme head in all cases civil or ecclesiastic. In the late days of Scotland's apostacy from God, the crown was sacrilegiously taken from Christ's head among us also, and set upon the head of a persecuting apostate. Dreadful were the invasions and encroachments that were made upon the crown royal of the King of Zion, by king, parliaments, and persons of all ranks; particu-

larly by the act rescissory, whereby axes and hammers were lifted up upon the carved work of the temple, hewing down the glorious work of reformation, restoring abjured Prelacy, rescinding the obligations of our solemn covenants, yea, ordering them to be burnt at the cross of Edinburgh, by the hand of the common hangman, prosecuting to the very death all that owned a work of reformation.

In those bloody days, the headship and sovereignty of Christ was contended for by many of the Lord's worthies even unto death; and it has been the peculiar honour of the church of Scotland, particularly in those days of persecution, to bear testimony unto Christ, as the alone head and king of his church, in opposition unto these dangerous and heaven-daring encroachments that were made upon it. And it is much to be regretted and lamented, that since the Lord turned back our captivity, in any measure, at the late wonderful revolution, whereby we were freed from the yoke of lordly Prelacy, we have not been so zealous for our great King, and his prerogatives, which were so much invaded, as might have been expected, upon our deliverance from that Egyptian thralldom. I do not remember of any particular act of Assembly, since the revolution, whereby the rights of the crown of Christ are asserted, in opposition to the encroachments that were made upon them in those days of public apostacy and persecution. Yea, instead of that are there not invasions and encroachments made upon the authority of Christ, and the immunities of his kingdom, even since that period, particularly in the end of Queen Anne's reign, when designs were formed for the overthrow of a Protestant succession? His headship and authority was invaded by an almost boundless toleration of all errors in doctrine, and corruptions in worship, excepting Popery and blasphemy against the Holy Trinity; two evils that never prevailed more in the memory of man in these lands, than since the toleration act was passed. His authority was at the same time invaded by the act restoring patronages, whereby power is

given to a malignant lord or laird, to present a man to take the charge of precious souls, who has perhaps no more concern about their salvation than the Great Turk.

And is it not matter of lamentation, to see some of the judicatories of this church, whose province it is to contend for the sovereignty of Christ, and the rights of his subjects, falling in with patrons and heritors of the nation, in opposition to the known rights of the Christian people to elect and choose their own pastors? How are the rights of the Lord's people invaded and trod upon by violent settlements up and down the land? A cry is gone up to heaven against the builders, by the spouse of Christ, like that, Cant. v. 7, 'The watchmen that went about the city, found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.' A cry and complaint came in before the bar of the last Assembly, for relief and redress of these, and many other grievances, both from ministers and people; but instead of a due regard had thereto, an act is passed confining the power of election unto heritors and elders, whereby a new wound is given to the prerogative of Christ, and the privilege of his subjects. I shall say the less of this act now, that I had opportunity to exoner myself, with relation to it, before the national assembly, where it was passed. Only allow me to say, that whatever church authority may be in that act, yet it wants the authority of the Son of God. All ecclesiastical authority under heaven is derived from him; and therefore any act that wants his authority, has no authority at all. And seeing the reverend synod has put me in this place, where I am in Christ's stead, I must be allowed to say of this act, what I apprehend Christ himself would say of it, were he personally present where I am, and that is, that by this act the corner-stone is receded from, he is rejected in his poor members, and the rich of this world put in their room. I say, were Christ here present, I think he would say with relation to that act, 'In as much as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.' By this act Christ is rejected in his authority,

because I can find no warrant from the word of God, to confer the spiritual privileges of his house upon the rich beyond the poor: whereas by this act, the man with the gold ring and gay clothing is preferred unto the man with the vile raiment and poor attire. I add further, that this act, I judge, is inconsistent with the principles and the practices of the best reformed churches, asserted in their public confessions of faith, and particularly with the known principles of this church since the reformation, asserted in our books of discipline, which we are bound by solemn covenant to maintain. I am firmly persuaded, that if a timely remedy be not provided, this act will very soon terminate in the overthrow of the Church of Scotland, and of a faithful ministry therein, in regard that the power of electing ministers is thereby principally lodged in the hands of a set of men who are generally disaffected to the power of godliness, to the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of this church, as well as to the government of our gracious sovereign King George, and the Protestant succession in his family.

All sound Presbyterians, who read the history of our forefathers, generally approve of the practice of Mr. Samuel Rutherford, Mr. James Guthrie, and other ministers of this Church, who protested against the resolutions, as a thing inconsistent with our covenants, and prejudicial to the work of reformation, although thereby the door was only opened to malignants to come into places of civil or military trust; and we who live at this time of day, may see the pernicious effects these resolutions had in the Church of Scotland. But what would our forefathers have thought, or what will succeeding generations think of this Act of Assembly, whereby malignants are vested, not with a civil or military, but with an ecclesiastical power, in the settlement of the generality of ministers through the Church of Scotland? By which means the Church of Scotland, and her sacred privileges, are rendered exceeding cheap, even in the eyes of her avowed enemies, this being a compliment they neither expected nor desired at our

hands. But, after all, I have good reason to believe, that this act is far from being the mind of the generality of presbyteries through this national church; and therefore would gladly hope a seasonable stand shall yet be made against it, in order to prevent its pernicious consequences.

My last inference shall be in a word of exhortation. Are ministers of the gospel builders of the church, and is it the great plot of heaven to have Christ exalted as the head stone of the corner? Then let me call and exhort my reverend brethren and fathers (and I desire to apply the exhortation to myself), *to concur with heart and hand in lifting up the chief corner-stone*, and making his name to be remembered unto all generations, that the people may praise him for ever and ever. However he has been, or still is rejected by other builders; yet let us study to exalt him, saying one to another, 'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.'

I shall not stay, after what has been said, to use many motives; only, in so many words, let us consider the excellency of his person, and the relation he bears to us and others of our tribe or family, both by nature and office, he being 'Immanuel, God with us,' ordained the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the church, to answer the maladies and miseries of ignorance, guilt, and bondage, we are brought under by the sin of the first Adam. Let us consider, that it is his Father's will, 'that all men should honour him, even as they honour the Father' himself; yea, his Father has 'highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name,' and hath ordered that 'every tongue should confess, that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of his eternal Father.' Let us consider, that this is the work of the Holy Ghost, the great scope of all his dictates in the word, and of all his graces, influences, and operations in the heart, being to lift up this corner-stone: John xvi. 14, 'He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.' This is the work wherein angels delight to be employed; with what alacrity do they celebrate his nativity, and tell the tidings of it unto the shepherds! Luke ii.

10, 11, 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' And thereupon, ver. 13, 14, 'a multitude of the heavenly host praise God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will towards men.' This was the work of all the prophets under the Old Testament, they all prophesied of him, 'testified of his sufferings, and of the glory that should follow.' They were as so many harbingers, sent to prepare the world for the reception of this glorious person. All the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, given by him unto the New Testament church, have had this as the great scope of their ministry, to edify the body of Christ, by lifting up the glory of this head stone of the corner, Rev. iv. 10. In short, this is and has been the business of the church militant here upon earth, and will be the work of the church triumphant through eternity. They all with one voice cry, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,' Rev. v. 12. And is it not glorious encouragement to us, to lift up the honour of our Redeemer, when we have such company to join us in our work?

Again, let us consider that Christ is *the stone*, without which there can be no building, for he is the church's all; 'Christ is all, and in all.' He is her light, her life, her righteousness, her strength, her peace, her food, her clothing, her wisdom, her holiness. So that if he be wanting, all is wanting, and the church is ruined. We cannot answer the commission we bear from our great Master if we do not exalt the chief corner-stone. It is 'Christ whom we preach,' Col. i. 28. We are to be of Paul's spirit, 'to know nothing' among our hearers, 'but Christ, and him crucified;' we are 'always to triumph in the revelation of Christ, so as the savour of his knowledge may be made manifest by us in every place.' To conclude, we can never finish our course with joy, and the ministry we have received of the Lord, except this be the great scope of our

work, whether in doctrine, discipline, worship, or government.

I shall shut up this discourse with a few advices in order to our being successful builders of this glorious fabric, whereof Christ is the head stone of the corner.

1. Then, Let us *beware of the fatal errors* before mentioned, whereby the Jewish builders ruined their once glorious fabric, and buried themselves in the ruins thereof. Let us beware of those doctrines vented in our day, which disparage the person of our glorious Redeemer, and derogate from his supreme and independent Deity, or his headship and sovereignty in his church. Let us beware of nauseating the spirituality of his doctrine, and the sublime mysteries of our holy religion, preferring thereunto the harangues of moralists. When we preach the law, let us open it in its extent and spirituality, so as to turn its edge upon the heart and conscience, that it may be a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Let us preach up the everlasting righteousness of the Son, as the only ground of a sinner's justification, and beware of every thing that has the least tendency to foster a sinner in his hope of salvation by the works of the law. Let us beware of blocking up the door of access to Christ, by legal qualifications, which are nowhere to be had but in Christ himself. Let us beware of formality either in preaching or praying, whereby we may deaden the ordinances of God, to our own souls, or the souls of our hearers; and, in order thereto, let us take care to licence or lay hands upon none, but such as, in the judgment of charity, we have reason to think are acquainted with the power of godliness, even though they have been trained up in literature at the foot of a professor of divinity. Let us beware of carnal policy in the matters of Christ's kingdom and glory. Let us beware of valuing ourselves upon the favour of men, great or small. Especially let us take care, that we be not swayed in the matters of Christ with the favour of great men; for this has been 'a snare on Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor.' Let us study impartially the exercise

of discipline, and beware of turning the edge of it against them that deserve it least. And let us set ourselves to stop these passages into the house of God, by which thieves and robbers must ordinarily enter, that the house of God be not turned into a den of thieves.

2. In order to our being successful builders, let us *seek the builders' word* from the great Master builder ; for there is a word which Christ gives to his faithful ministers, whereby the art of building is much conveyed, John xvii. 14, 'I have given them thy word.' Without this word from the mouth of Christ, we will never know the true art of building the church : by this word the man of God is made a perfect builder, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. And if you ask me, what is that word ? I answer, It is an experimental acquaintance with the power of the word upon the soul, particularly the knowledge of that leading mystery, 'God manifested in the flesh.'

3. Let us take care that *every stone of the building correspond with the foundation and corner-stone* ; whatever doctrines or practices do not hang right with this regulating stone ; let that be cast. In order to which, let us examine our own and others' doctrines and conversation by the plumb line and infallible rule of the word : 'To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. viii. 20.

4. Let us *observe the signs of the times* ; and whenever we discern the danger a-coming, either from open enemies, or pretended friends, let us give the cry, like faithful watchmen ; and, though fellow-builders be offended, there is no help for that. It is a heavy charge that is laid by God against some, as above, that they were dumb dogs, that could not bark, but preferred their own carnal ease unto the safety of the church, Isa. lvi. 10, 11, 12.

5. Lastly, Let us *wrestle much at a throne of grace* for the countenance of the great Master, and assistance of his Spirit ; for 'except the Lord build the house, the builders build in vain. Paul may plant, and Apollos water : but it is God that giveth the increase.

SERMON XIII.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ZION'S KING.

Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.—Psal. ii. 6.

In the first three verses of this psalm, we have an account of the strong opposition that is made to the kingdom and government of the Messiah. One would have thought, that when he came into the world, every knee would bow unto him, crying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David;' and that all the sceptres of the earth would have been laid at his feet; but never was any government so much opposed. For, (1.) We are here told, that hell and earth take the alarm when he appears upon the stage: 'The *heathen* rage,' &c. (2.) The opposition they make is described; it is spiteful and malicious; for they *rage* and gnash their teeth at him, filled with indignation against him, Luke xiii. 14. John xi. 47. Acts v. 17, 33. and xix. 28, &c. It is deliberate; they *take counsel*, &c. It is resolute; they '*set themselves* against the Lord,' set their faces like flint, and make themselves a brow of brass. It is joint opposition; they *combine*. (3.) What they aim at by this opposition to Christ; they are children of Belial, that cannot endure the yoke, they *cast away his cords*, his commandments, his laws; these are what they resolve to break through. (4.) See how all these designs are baffled with the greatest ease, ver. 4, 5. (5.) Notice the stability of Christ's kingdom, notwithstanding of all these attempts of hell, in the words of my text, *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.*

Where we may notice,

1. The royal office and character of our glorious Redeemer; he is a *King*; this name he hath 'on his vesture and on his thigh,' Rev. xix. 16.

2. The authority by which he reigns; He is *my King*, says God the Father, and I have set him up from everlasting: 'The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.' The world disown his authority, but I own it; I have set him, I have 'given him to be head over all things to the church.'

3. The particular kingdom over which he rules, it is *over my holy hill of Zion*, an eminent type of the gospel church. The tabernacle was set up on mount Zion; and therefore called a *holy hill*. Christ's throne is in his church, it is his head quarters, and the place of his particular residence, 'The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation. His laws go out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. There are the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.'

4. Notice the firmness of the divine purpose with respect unto this matter? *Yet have I set him King*. Whatever be the plots of hell and earth to the contrary, he reigns by his Father's ordination.

OBSERVE, That Christ is King in Zion, the alone Sovereign of his church, by his Father's appointment and ordination. *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall endeavour through divine assistance,

I. To speak a little of this King.

II. Of the kingdom which he governs.

III. Of the administration of his kingdom.

IV. Apply.

I. As to the first, I shall endeavour to give you very briefly a view of the excellent qualities of Zion's King, and let them serve as so many motives to strangers to submit unto his authority, and as so many cordials unto his friends and loyal subjects, in this dark and cloudy day.

1. He is a very *ancient* King. He is indeed 'the An-

cient of days:’ he is no upstart; his throne was ‘set up from everlasting;’ none can compete with him for antiquity, ‘The everlasting Father; Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth were of old from everlasting.’

2. He is a King of *incomparable wisdom*: ‘A wiser than Solomon is here.’ Solomon’s wisdom was but folly compared with his; for ‘in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’

3. A King of *irresistible power, and absolute authority*: ‘All power in heaven and earth are his.’ He is ‘the man of God’s right hand;’ the arm of JEHOVAH is in him: he hath ‘a name above every name, and at his name every knee shall bow.’

4. He is a King of *unspotted holiness and purity*. ‘The holy One of Israel is our King; of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity.’ His name is a holy name. His throne is a holy throne; he ‘sits upon the throne of his holiness.’ His laws are holy laws; ‘The law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good.’ His covenant with his subjects is a holy covenant; ‘he hath commanded his holy covenant.’ The officers that bear the vessels of his house are, and should be, holy.

5. He is a *righteous King*. ‘Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Behold a King shall reign in righteousness,’ Isa. xxxii. 1. We have an account of the equity of his administration, Isa. xi. 1—3. Psal. xlv. 7, ‘He loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity.’

6. He is a *gracious King*. His name is ‘the Lord, the Lord God gracious.’ He is said to be ‘full of grace,’ and grace comes by him, and rivers of grace run from his throne, Rev. xxii. 1. Psal. xlvi. 4, ‘There is a river, the streams whereof do make glad the city of God.’ The throne whereon he sits is a throne of grace, and acts of grace are emitted from his throne, even the great and precious promises, which are the edicts of the King, or beneficial laws issued out for the benefit of the subject.

7. He is a *most merciful and compassionate King*. He has bowels of compassion towards his enemies; he would

have gathered his enemies in Jerusalem, 'as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings;' and when his enemies prove obstinate, he 'weeps over them.' He is loth at his very heart, to give up with a people that are giving up with him, Hos. xi. 8, 'How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim.'

8. Of *wonderful sympathy with his subjects*. He is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities;' he reckons any favour or injury done to them, as done to himself, Matth. xxv. at the close.

9. A King of *immense riches, and unbounded liberality and bounty*. His riches are unsearchable: 'Riches and honour are with him.' And as for his bounty, he distributes his grace as freely as the sun scatters his beams through the earth. He invites all the world to come and share of his fulness, Isa. lv. 1, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.'

10. He is a King of *untainted veracity and truth*. One may depend upon his royal word, 'He is not a man that he should lie, neither the Son of man that he should repent.' His name is 'Truth, the Word of God.' One may venture his salvation with safety, on his word, for he never failed; 'all the promises of God are in him yea and amen.' He hath sealed them with his blood, and sets to his royal amen, as 'the faithful and true witness,' to every one of them.

11. He is *an immortal King*. Other kings 'die like men, they fail like the sons of the mighty;' death brings them out of their high seats, and sets them upon a level with the beggar; but the King of Zion 'lives for ever and ever.' It is true he was once dead; but being 'the Prince of life,' it was not possible that death, the king of terrors, could detain him in his territories, Rev. i. 18, 'I was dead, but am alive.' And the life of all his subjects is bound up in his life.

12. He is at present *an invisible King*, out of the sight of our bodily eyes. He has gone within the veil 'to appear in the presence of God for us;' he pleads the cause of

all his subjects in the highest heavens. But still he is visible to the eyes of faith; 'Whom having not seen we love.' And in a little he will be visible to every eye, Rev. i. 7, 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.'

13. He is *an eternal King*: 'The King eternal.' As his kingdom is from everlasting, so it is to everlasting: 'and of the increase of his kingdom and government there shall be no end.'

14. He is *an independent King*. All the powers of the earth depend on him; 'By me kings reign, and princes decree justice;' but he depends upon none. It is true his mediatory kingdom is committed to him by his Father, but his essential kingdom is as independent as that of God the Father, 'he being in the form of God, and thinks it no robbery to be equal with God.'

15. He is a *puissant and warlike King*. He is 'the Lord of hosts; he is a man of war.' He encountered Satan, and wounded, bruised, and destroyed him upon Mount Calvary, and he will wage war for ever against all that refuse his government, and say, 'We will not have this man to rule over us.' He will send out his armies and destroy them; and not only his own vengeance, but the vengeance of his Father, will fall on them, Psal. cx. 1, &c.

16. He is 'the *King of glory*,' Psal. xxiv. When the summons is given to sinners, to 'lift up the everlasting doors' of their hearts to him, they are told that it is no less a person than the 'King of glory' that calls. Solomon in all his glory could not compare with the lily, far less with him who is 'the brightness of his Father's glory,' and on whom hangs all the glory of his Father's house, Isa. xxii. 24.

II. I come now to give some account of Christ's kingdom; and here I shall first offer a few distinctions regarding that kingdom.

Know, then, in the first place, that the kingdom of the Son of God is twofold, either essential or personal. His *essential* kingdom belongs unto him as to his divine

nature, or as he is the Son of God, the second person of the glorious and ever blessed Trinity, the same in substance, equal in power and glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Christ, considered in this view, is the great Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things therein, and the government and disposal belongs unto him by right of creation. But it is not of this absolute or essential kingdom of Christ that I now speak, but of his *personal* and *mediatory* kingdom, as he is Immanuel, God-man; and under this consideration he acts by a delegated authority, or a power committed or given him by the Father, for the salvation of the elect that were given him. Man being fallen from the state wherein he was created, must, in order to his recovery, be brought under another model of government than that which he was under at his creation, when he was subject to God only as his Creator and Benefactor, promising life to him upon the terms of the covenant of works; I say, in order to his recovery a new scene of government behoved to be erected, the plan of which was laid in the council of peace from eternity. By virtue of this plan of government, the first person of the glorious Trinity sustains the part of the supreme Judge, passing a sentence of condemnation upon all mankind for the breach of his holy law, but yet so far dispenses with the rigour of the law as to admit of a ransom and satisfaction. God, in the person of the Son, sustains the place of a Mediator, Surety, and Redeemer, promising to satisfy and to repair the honour of the holy law. Upon which undertaking the Judge is so well pleased, that, in order to the accomplishment of the Son's undertaking, 'all power in heaven and in earth is given him;' all government is committed to the Son; angels, men, and devils, and all creatures are put into his hand, that he may make them subservient to the recovery of that poor contemptible creature man. And it is upon this foundation that the great JEHOVAH says, in the text and context, *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.* 'I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said

unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen,' &c.

Again the mediatory kingdom of Christ is either more general or special. His *general* mediatory kingdom extends itself over heaven, earth, and hell, (as I said just now,) Eph. i. at the close: God hath 'given him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body.' Phil. ii. 9—11, 'At, or in, the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue must confess, that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' All persons, kingdoms, and revolutions of affairs in the world, are ordered and managed by our Mediator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He sets up kings and pulls them down, as serves the designs of his glory, and of his church's good. Hence it is proposed, as matter of triumph to the church in her distress, Psal. cxlvi. 10, 'The Lord doth reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord.' But the kingdom of Christ is to be considered as more *special* and *particular*, and so his church is his kingdom, in which and over which he reigns. This kingdom or church of Christ is sometimes in scripture called *his body*, because of the union that is between him and them; sometimes *his flock*, because he as a Shepherd, watches over them and provides them their pasture.

Still farther, this particular kingdom of Christ, the church, is to be considered either as militant on earth or triumphant in heaven. The church *triumphant* is that part of the saints of God who are by death gathered to him in glory, where Christ is; and the heavens are to contain him and them until 'the consummation of all things,' at the end of time, when he will descend to the last judgment, and all his saints and angels attending him as his retinue. But it is of the church *militant* on earth I now speak. It is called militant because the members of it are yet in a state of war upon the field of battle, wrestling with sin, Satan, and the world.

The militant church, again, is either visible or invisible. The *invisible* catholic consists of all believers who are savingly united unto Christ, as their head of influence and government, by his regenerating and sanctifying Spirit. And those are called his invisible church, because the bonds of union between him and them are such as are not visible to the eye of the world; they are not perceptible by sense and reason; their life, and all the concerns thereof, are 'hid with Christ in God,' and therefore sometimes called his *hidden ones*. The *visible* catholic church of Christ consists of all these through the whole world, who make a visible and credible profession of their faith in Christ, and subjection unto him as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and who own and acknowledge the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government that he has appointed, having the gospel preached unto them by ambassadors of his sending, and his ordinances administered. This catholic visible church, consisting of all that profess the name of Christ, but especially of them who do really believe in him, this is that which in my text is called *the holy hill of Zion*, over which Christ doth reign. Now, regarding this church, or the kingdom of Christ, I would offer the following remarks.

1. It is a *spiritual* kingdom. It is not of this world, as the Jews imagined, and as others imagine, who would fashion and mould it according to the kingdoms of this world. The laws, the ordinances, the discipline, and whole of this kingdom is spiritual, and has a relation principally to the souls of men and women, and an eternal state to come. And seeing it is so, what a strange notion of the kingdom of Christ must men and judicatories among us have, who distinguish men in the affairs of Christ's kingdom by the gold ring, gay clothing, and worldly heritages. Alas! true notions of the kingdom of Christ are generally lost among us in this generation. Some have no other notion of the church of Christ, than a society of men meeting together, under the name of judicatories, under the protection of civil authority, whether they be acting according to the laws of Christ or against them, for the inter-

est of the body of Christ, or to its hurt and prejudice; whether they be holding Christ as a head, or practically renouncing his headship, however they profess the contrary. I make no difficulty to affirm, that a church not holding the head, Christ, in all his offices, is but an idol of man's making; and zeal for such a church, is but like the zeal of these who cried, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these,' and yet were real enemies to the God of the temple; or like Ephraim, concerning whom it is said, 'Ephraim hath forsaken the Lord, and buildeth temples.' I say, then, that the kingdom of Christ is of a spiritual nature, and it relates principally to the soul, or to the inner man; hence Christ declares concerning his disciples and followers, 'The kingdom of God is within you;' and without this, it is little matter what church or communion folk be of.

2. Christ's kingdom is *a large yet select* kingdom. It is true, under the Old Testament dispensation the kingdom of Christ was pent up within the confines of the land of Judea; 'To them belonged the adoption, the covenants, the law, and the promises,' while the generality of the Gentile nations were held as dogs, aliens to Israel's commonwealth. But blessed be God, now the waters of the sanctuary have run down to the valley of Shittim, and the gospel is 'preached unto all nations, for the obedience of faith.' Psal. ii. 8, 'I will give him the heathen for his inheritance,' &c. Psal. lxxii. 8, 'His dominion shall reach from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.' But although the kingdom of Christ, I mean his true church, be of a large extent, yet it is but a select kingdom, I mean, it is not populous, when compared with the kingdom of the god of this world. Christ's flock, indeed, is but a *little flock*, comparatively considered, Luke xii. 32, &c. They are but little in respect of their numbers. Abstractly considered, it is true, they will at the end of the day make an 'innumerable company, which no man can number;' but viewed in comparison of the wicked, they are but few; 'strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be

that find it.' They are like the gleanings after the vintage. 'I will take them,' says God, 'one of a city, and two of a family, and bring them unto Zion.' They are but little in respect of quality. Christ's subjects are generally among the poorer sort of people: 'God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.' 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Not many wise men after the flesh,' &c. They are little in regard of esteem; the world make but little account of them; they are generally reckoned the dross and offscourings of the earth, 1 Cor. iv. 11—13; but however little account the world may make of them, yet when Christ, at the end of the day, presents them unto his Father, they shall shine like the stars, yea, like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

3. It is *a regular and well governed kingdom*: 'Jerusalem is a city compactly built together.' We have a description of the regularity and good order of the kingdom of Christ, under the notion of a city built four-square, Rev. xxi. See to this purpose, Eph. iv. 16. There are many irregularities and disorders in the church of Christ, as she is managed by the hands of men, as sad experience testifies among us at this day; but as she is under the administration of the great King that God has set in the midst of her, there is nothing but beauty and order. If the church of Christ, even his visible militant church, were governed exactly according to Zion's laws by her pretended officers, there would be nothing but order and beauty in the whole kingdom. But when men go about to make other laws than the laws of Christ, and to make their will the standard of government, rather than the will of the great King, this casts all into confusion, and yet even these confusions are managed by the King for the advantage of his true kingdom and subjects, and in due time he will bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion.

4. The true kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that *is much hated by the devil and the world*. She is the eye-sore of hell and all its confederates; hence we are told in the beginning of this psalm, that when Christ comes to set up his king-

dom, 'The heathen rage, the people imagine mischief, the kings of the earth, and princes thereof, take counsel' how to suppress this kingdom of Christ. The gates of hell wage war against the kingdom of Christ. The world loves its own, who are under the government of the 'god of this world,' and who 'walk according to the course of this world;' but they hate the laws, the ordinances, the discipline, and subjects of Christ's kingdom; they are intolerable unto them, and therefore they are always trying to make themselves rid of them. Hence are all the reproaches, afflictions, persecutions, and massacres of the followers of Christ, that we read of both in sacred and profane history.

5. The kingdom which Christ governs is a *holy* kingdom. The church of Christ, even his visible church, is a sanctified society, federally holy; you see in the text it is called *the holy hill of Zion*. All the members of the visible church are dedicated to God in baptism, in which ordinance we renounce all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, and are solemnly engaged to wage war against sin, and to 'resist it even unto blood.' The design of all church discipline, and of all ordinances, ministers, officers, and judicatories, is to preserve the church, or kingdom of Christ, from corruption, either in principle or practice, that she may be a holy lump unto him. Whenever any scandal breaks out in a church, it is to be purged out by the discipline of Christ's appointment, lest that leaven leaven the whole lump, and provoke the Lord, the holy One of Israel, to depart from her. 1 Cor. iii. 17, the church is called *the temple of God*: 'The temple of God is holy; and if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.' If this word of God be true, as I am sure it is, they stand but a sorry chance at this day, who are defiling the church of Christ, by complicated and multiplied scandals.

III. I come now to take notice of the administration of the King of Zion in his visible kingdom; and here I would specify the following acts of his royal authority.

1. It is an act of his royal authority to *give the lively oracles of his word* unto his visible church: 'He (viz. Zion's

King) gave his statutes unto Jacob, and his testimonies unto Israel; he dealt not so with any nation.' Whence is it that the gospel comes to one nation, and not to another? Why was it given to the Jews under the Old Testament, when it was denied to the Gentiles? And whence is it, that now, under the New Testament, the gospel is preached to the Gentiles, when it is denied to the Jews? And whence is it, that the gospel is sent to us in this land, when many nations are worshipping the devil, for want of the knowledge of God and of his mind? Why, this is just an act of the sovereign power and pleasure of Zion's King.

2. By his royal authority he has appointed *what form of government* is to be observed in his visible kingdom. He has not left his church in a state of anarchy, or confusion, or to be moulded according to the fancies of men, as may best serve their politic views and designs. The Old Testament church had a certain form both of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; much more must the New Testament church, considering that the whole Mosaic economy was but like a porch to lead the world in to the greater glory of the New Testament dispensation. This the apostle argues at length, 2 Cor. iii. from ver. 7. to the close. Of this form of the house the prophet Ezekiel speaks as a thing most sacred, chap. xliii. 10, 11, 'Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities, and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.' Where you see that the form and fashion of the church of the New Testament, among the Gentile nations, is reckoned by God such a sacred thing, and of so great importance, that the prophet, and consequently all ministers of Christ, are commanded expressly to show the form and fashion of it, from the pat-

tern described in the mount of divine revelation ; and not only so, but to write it in a book, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. What that form of government is, has been stated from the word of God, and solemnly sworn to by all ranks of the land, since our reformation from popery. It is true, there are a set of men in the land, that set up for other schemes of government ; but they that remove these land marks will do it to their cost.

3. His *appointing officers, both ordinary and extraordinary*, is another act of the royal authority of the King of Zion. We have an account of these officers of both kinds, Eph. iv. 11, 12, ‘ When he ascended up on high, (whenever he had sitten down upon his throne of glory above,) he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the edifying of his body.’ Ye know it is the prerogative of the king to nominate and call, and appoint, whom he pleases as officers civil or military, under him in the government of the kingdom ; and no man dare, upon his highest peril, assume any of these offices, from the highest to the lowest, without the king’s commission ; if he should, he would be found guilty of treason, and of usurping the king’s prerogative. So is it in the kingdom of Christ ; it is his prerogative to call, and send out officers to serve him, ‘ and no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.’ Christ himself did not go without his Father’s commission, to act as his viceroy, ‘ I the Lord have called thee, I will hold thine hand, and will help thee ;’ and if Christ would not run without his Father’s commission and call, it must be dangerous for any to intrude themselves into the sacred offices of his kingdom, without his call and commission.

4. His *appointing and ordaining the way how his officers are to be chosen, and installed visibly in their office*, is another act of Christ’s royal power and authority, as King of Zion. As it is he that gives gifts unto men, for the edifying of his subjects ; so he has given it as his pleasure, that his

visible subjects, or these that are so in the judgment of charity, should be the electors of the office-bearers in his visible church or kingdom. It has been made evident from Acts i. that when an apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas, the hundred and twenty persons did nominate and present two to the apostles, and one of these was pitched upon by an immediate determination from heaven, because he was to be an extraordinary officer. It is from Acts vi. clear like a sun-beam, that the multitude of the disciples did elect the seven deacons, and present them for ordination to the apostles. It is indeed contended against this, that the manner of electing deacons, who were to have the charge of the poor, and of the public money appointed for their relief, is no argument for the election of ministers and elders, who are superior officers. But to this it is easily answered, that if it be the privilege of the visible church, and of Christ's visible and credible subjects, to have the choice of these that are to have the care of their money, much more of those that are to have the care and charge of their precious souls, which are far more valuable. The argument, from the less to the greater, is strong in this matter. It has been also cleared from Acts xiv. 23. that the apostles, when going through and visiting the churches, which they had formerly planted, ordained elders, or presbyters, in every city, by *cheirotomie*, or stretching out of the hand, which was the common way of taking the voices of the people at that time, both in civil and sacred affairs. So that the manner of electing ministers and other officers in the church, is not left to a patron, a presbytery, or to men that are heritors in this world. No, it is a privilege that belongs unto the subjects of Christ's kingdom, or to the community of those who are visibly of, and in the communion of the church of Christ, and who are walking according to his laws; by which means all ignorant, erroneous, or scandalous persons, or these that are not of the communion of the church, are evidently excluded. And this privilege of electing ministers and officers to the church, continued in the church till about seven hundred

years after Christ, when it was violently wrested from them by the usurpations of popery.

5. Another act of Christ's royal power and authority in his visible church, is *his appointing ordinances for worship to be dispensed by ministers of the gospel*. Such is the public preaching of the gospel, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' This is the great ordinance of God for gathering of subjects unto Christ's kingdom, and for the edifying of these that are brought in. And then there is the ordinance of baptism to be dispensed 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' There is also the ordinance of the supper, for 'What we received of the Lord, that we are to deliver,' 1 Cor. xi. 23. And there is public prayer and praise, catechising both in public, and teaching from house to house. These and the like ordinances, for edification and worship, Christ, as King of Zion, has appointed to be dispensed by ministers in his visible kingdom. And remember, Sirs, it is God's authority in any ordinance, that gives it value, efficacy, and validity; just as the stamp of the king upon the coin makes it to pass current. Nothing will pass current in the church of Christ, with his loyal subjects, that does not bear the stamp of the authority of the King of Zion. What is the reason that the subjects of Christ, that desire to be faithful to him at this day, desert the ministry of mere pretended pastors? Why, it is because they do not carry the King's commission; they run unsent; they do not hear the voice of Christ in them; they do not see them coming in by the door of the fold; and therefore they will not follow them. Why do we protestants reject the doctrines of the Romish church, their mass, breviaries, and idolatries? Why, it is because they do not bear the stamp of God's authority. And, on the other hand, why do we sprinkle water in baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Why do we eat and drink at the table of the Lord a little simple bread and wine, which to carnal reason are inconsistent things? Why do we preach the gospel, which to the wise of this world is foolishness? Why do we pray,

and praise, and go about other duties? It is just because they are all commanded and ordained of God.

6. Christ, as King of Zion, *has appointed censures for discipline and good order for his kingdom*, for the removal of offences, and preventing the leaven of sin and scandal from running through and defiling his church, such as private and public admonition, reproof, exhortation, and the sentences of greater and lesser excommunication. These are called 'the keys of the kingdom;' and when these keys or censures, are exercised according to Christ's appointment, by the officers of his kingdom, 'what they bind on earth, is bound in heaven; and what they loose on earth, is loosed in heaven.' The apostle writing to the Corinthians regarding the scandal of incest, appoints such a person to be excommunicated, and delivered over to Satan, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5; and the reason he gives for passing such a censure, with respect to the church, is, that she might not be defiled with that impure leaven, 'Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?' And it is the opinion of Dr. Owen, in his treatise upon schism, that, whenever a visible church comes to that pass, that she will not, or cannot, purge herself of notour and evident scandals, she, in that case, is to be departed from; and the reason is, because she has lost or cast away the keys of the kingdom, committed to her by her great King, and then error and scandal runs without control, till the whole mass be defiled.

7. Christ, as King of his visible church, *has authorized the officers of his kingdom to meet in a judicative capacity*, in his name and authority, for the better and joint regulating of the affairs of his kingdom. The judicatories of a church, higher and lower, constituted in his name, and moulded according to his appointment, for the government and for the exercise of the keys of discipline; these, I say, are the glory of a church, for these are 'the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.' When these courts, constituted in the name of the King of Zion, proceed in their management with an eye to the honour of

Zion's King, and according to that complete system of laws that he has given in his word, then it is that a church 'looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,' unto all ignorant, erroneous, or scandalous persons; and her very enemies are obliged to say of her, as Balaam said of Israel, 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob?' Now, all this glory hangs upon the nail fastened in a sure place, for he alone is King in Zion, the government is upon his shoulders. He it is that gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven unto his office-bearers, and promises that 'what they bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and what they loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven;' and where they assemble in courts for discipline, he 'will be in the midst of them.'

8. Christ by his authority, as King of Zion, *has bounded and limited all the courts and officers of his kingdom*, to govern his subjects, and to teach them no other thing than he has commanded. Thus in Matth. xxviii. 19, 20, he says, 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' Observe, That it is the character of Christ's faithful servants, whether ministers or Christians, to observe and do all things whatever *he* has commanded them in his word. It is not what kings, parliaments, or assemblies, command, but what God commands, which is the rule by which they walk; the laws of man must be tried by the law of God. There is a generation of ministers in our day who, instead of keeping the commandments of God, are very careful to keep the commandments of men, though even cross to the command of God. If they be commanded by men to profane the Sabbath, to profane the pulpit, and ministerial character, and to prostitute the headship of Christ, and turn heralds to another head than Christ, they will do it, and defend the deed when they have done. Such servants of men cannot be the servants of Christ Jesus, but they serve their own bellies. So that, if such officers, or courts of Christ's kingdom, begin to 'teach for doctrines the commandments of men,' or to impose any laws upon his subjects than what Christ has

given, they have good reason to ask, By what authority such or such things are done? and to disregard all such laws or impositions.

9. Christ, as King of Zion, has given express orders unto all his subjects, *to examine all spirits, all doctrines, all laws and impositions, at the bar of the word*, and to contend earnestly for the purity of his truth and worship, ordinances and institutions; Jude 3, 'Contend earnestly for the faith delivered unto the saints.' Where it is deserving of consideration, that the keeping of the truth and purity of doctrine, is not simply committed to ministers, or officers of his house, but to *saints*, that is to the whole visible church; it is a trust for which they are to be accountable, if, through their neglect, *it fall in the streets*. Blessed be God, we have the written word in purity, we have excellent standards of doctrine in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. But how is the law and testimony dispensed and given out through many corners of the land, when an empty jingle of human oratory, and dry harangues of heathenish morality, or virtue, as they call it, are substituted in the room of the gospel of Christ; a natural kind of religion preached up, and the supernatural mysteries of the gospel, such as the incarnation and satisfaction of the Son of God, justification by his imputed righteousness; regeneration, sanctification, or gospel holiness, are exploded as unfashionable? And, among these that aim at better things, how little is the true order of gospel doctrine observed. The duties of the law are inculcated as the foundation of the glorious privileges of the gospel, and not the grace of God in the gospel laid as the foundation both of privileges and duty. And thus the weapons that are 'mighty through God for pulling down of the strong holds' of Satan are cast away, and weapons that are merely carnal taken up in their room.

10. Christ acts as King of Zion, when *he resents injuries* done to his kingdom or subjects, and sent and called officers. Sometimes the King of Zion has resented visible injuries done to his visible church, in a very open and visible man-

ner. He 'makes Jerusalem a burdensome stone unto her enemies,' Zech. xii. 3. and ver. 2. 'he makes Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about.' For the injuries done to Jerusalem God pulls down the nobles of Babylon, and dashes the Babylonish empire in pieces. So for his true and loyal subjects he gives a charge unto the world, to beware of offending them, or doing them hurt; for, says he, 'it were better for them,' that do it, 'that a millstone were hanged about their necks, and they cast into the sea.' And as for the ministers and office-bearers, he says, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' They that receive them, coming in their Master's name, receive himself, and his Father; and they that despise them, despise him, and him that sent him. The sound of their master's feet is behind them, when going his errands, Matth. xxviii. ult. 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

11. Christ as King of Zion *removes his royal standard from one people or nation to another.* When a people have long enjoyed the gospel, and the ordinances of his worship, and continue barren under them, and slight his ordinances, officers, and laws, in that case, by his royal authority, he translates the seat of his visible kingdom, and the badges of his presence, elsewhere: hence Christ tells the Jews, that his kingdom was to be taken from them, and given to a people that would make better use of it. So dealt he with the churches of Lesser Asia; so has he dealt with many famous and once flourishing churches; to this purpose is what you read concerning 'the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, the house of Israel,' Isa. v. Thus I have given you an account of some of the royal actings of the King of Zion, with respect to his church as she is a visible society of men and women, professing allegiance to him.

IV. The fourth head in the method was the application. And here I shall apply it by way first of inference, and then of exhortation. First, I deduce the following inferences:—

1. See what *happy persons the true and loyal subjects of Christ (believers) are.* As it was said by the Queen of

Sheba, concerning the servants of Solomon, so may we say of them, they are happy, for they dwell in the King's court, Psal. lxxxiv. &c. All his subjects are made sons and heirs, 'kings and priests unto God;' their King hears them when they call, Psal. xx. 9. They enjoy peace under his administration. They have trouble from the world; but 'in him they have peace;' they dwell on high, dwell in safety. They shall all be well seen to in the day of famine and trouble.

2. See *the dangerous risk they run that invade his government, and contemn his authority.*

Quest. Who are these who do this?

Ans. 1. They that *turn the authority, derived from him, to the hurt and prejudice of his kingdom and interest.* All power and authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is derived from him. All *civil* power is from him: 'By me kings rule.' He sets up kings and casts them down at his pleasure. And therefore it must be a dangerous abuse of civil authority, to enact laws invading the royalties of his crown, and the liberties of his subjects; laws for the profaning of his day and worship, and for modelling the courts of his house, and officers of his kingdom, according to their mind; laws obliging the ambassadors of Zion's King to change their holding, and to become the heralds and officers of king and parliament. Again, as all civil, so all *ecclesiastical* authority is derived from him, as the fountain of it, having 'all power in heaven and on earth.' And if so, what a horrid conspiracy against the King of Zion must it be, to employ that power for screening the erroneous, and censuring these that bear witness for him, for violating the rights and privileges of his subjects, and carrying on violent intrusions of officers into his house, to the dividing, destroying, and scattering of his subjects? We may easily think what the King will do with such courts and officers, when he reckons with them.

2. They invade his kingdom and authority, who, being civil officers, *claim power in the church, whether they be king or parliament.* It ill becomes any crowned head to wear the

jewel of supremacy in and over the church, which is the house of the living God, save he only whom God hath anointed King over his holy hill of Zion. The Pope, or Antichrist, pretended to this supremacy; and when King Henry VIII. of England renounced the Pope's jurisdiction, he took that jewel of the crown of Christ, and set it in his own crown, and got himself proclaimed head in all causes, not only civil but ecclesiastical, and the oath of supremacy imposed in consequence thereof upon the subjects of England where it stands to this day. This supremacy, at the restoration of King Charles, was extended to Scotland, and an absolute power granted to the king, to mould the church of Christ according to his pleasure. Upon which, contrary to the oath of God, lying upon himself and the whole land, the whole covenanted work of reformation from 1638, and the obligation of our solemn covenants for reformation, were rescinded by acts of parliament. Our forefathers witnessed against these things, and many of them sealed their testimony with their blood. But their testimony, for Scotland's reformation and solemn covenants, has never been fairly adopted by the church of Scotland, since the deliverance God wrought for us at the Revolution. However, God, who takes the wise in their own craftiness, and turns the counsel of the froward headlong, has, in his overruling providence, raised up that testimony, and a judicatory upon the footing of the covenanted reformation, who are pledged to revive and renew our covenant allegiance unto the exalted King of Zion.

3. They contemn the authority of the King of Zion, *who walk willingly after the commandments of men, in opposition to the commands of Christ.* When the commandments of men interfere with the authority of Christ, it is plain from the practice of the apostles and of the three children, what we are to do. 'Whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye,' said the apostles before the Jewish sanhedrim. And say the three children, when required by an angry king, in view of a fiery furnace, to bow down to his idol, 'We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.' How

culpable then are those men, who call themselves ministers, officers, and ambassadors of Christ, who, contrary to the laws of his house, at the commandment of worm man, are profaning his Sabbaths, polluting his worship, prostituting their office by sinful compliance, and throwing up the headship and sovereignty of Christ, our only King, Judge, and Lawgiver, and casting the jewels of his crown under the feet of men?

4. They will be found equally guilty, *who stand by and see those injuries done to the King of Zion by others*, and who though they be not themselves actors, yet, I say, stand by as spectators, or are silent without witnessing against these things, yea, associate themselves with traitors to the Redeemer's crown, as though they were his loyal subjects and officers. Would any man be reckoned a loyal subject to the king, especially any who have sworn the allegiance and abjuration, and are entrusted with honorary and beneficial posts, and are daily eating the king's bread, and receiving his pay; I say, would such a person be reckoned a loyal subject who, being witness to manifest treason committed against the king, and yet should hold his peace; and not only so, but allow such to sit in the king's courts, and sit with them as if they had done no injury? When manifest treasons are committed against the King of Zion, and corruptions, either in principle or practice, are allowed, and not purged out by discipline; when the majority of a church, and of her judicatories, are in a conspiracy, the plain command in that case is, 2 Cor. vi. 17, to 'come out from among them, and to be separate, not to touch the unclean thing,' that the Lord may *receive us*. When the corrupt party are few, says Hooker, they are to be cast out; but when the body, or majority of the church, becomes wicked, then says he, the sound part is to withdraw from her; for which he cites the above scripture, 2 Cor. vi. 17. The apostle Paul, when he orders the incestuous person to be cast out by excommunication, gives this reason for it, because 'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;' plainly intimating, that when

the whole lump of a church is leavened with unpurged scandal and error, she is like the house under the law, overrun with the leprosy, which was not only to be left by the inhabitants, but to be taken down to the foundation. Sin is, in scripture, compared unto smoke. You know, when a house is so smoky, that it is like to stifle the breath or smother the inhabitants, there is no help for it, they must leave the house, and seek new lodgings.

Last inference. See from this doctrine *an excellent rule for all the subjects of the King of Zion*, who desire to be found faithful unto him in a dark and cloudy day, how to steer their course. You know, in the time of a revolt and insurrection in a kingdom, against the government, when all things are running to confusion, the loyal subjects, who adhere to the interests of their king, make inquiry after the king's standard. Their question is not, Who have the greatest numbers? or, Where is the greatest body of men swaying? But if the king's standard be lifted up, however few they be that own it, why, their question is, Where doth it stand? or, What is the party that are cleaving to it? This is the very case in this divided and distracted day wherein we live. There is an insurrection against the King of Zion, even in the house of his professed friends, and even under the covert of his name and authority. Yet many that profess friendship to the King of Zion in this land, are in suspense as to what hand to turn. Why, the way to come to a resolution is, to inquire, Where stands the standard of the covenanted testimony of Christ in the land? whether within or without the camp? If it be held faithfully within the camp, then it is duty to join it there: but if it be without the camp, we are to follow it there although we should be obliged to take up the cross in following it.

Second, I shall address a word of exhortation, first, unto all these that profess themselves the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and then to those who are its enemies.

1. The subjects of the King of Zion I would exhort *to keep the King's court*, I mean his ordinances for worship.

David, though he was a great king, yet we find, Psal. lxxxiv. he made conscience of attending the tabernacles of the King of Zion, and reckoned it his honour so to do; and when driven from the place of public worship, through the persecution of Saul, or Absalom's rebellion, he envies the happiness of the very swallows or sparrows, which were allowed to nestle about the sanctuary, while he was driven away from it, and had not access to attend his Lord and King there, Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2—10. What shall we think of those, who have the doors of the sanctuary of the King opened, the ordinances of the New Testament dispensed at their door; and yet either through pride, or heart contempt of the ordinances, or love to the world, or sloth, or other carnal causes or pretences, turn their back on the courts of the great King; and yet take it in very ill part, if ministers tell them they do not act the part of loyal subjects unto Zion's King? Is it to be supposed, that people ever opened their hearts unto him, who contemn and disregard his institutions, where he has required his subjects to attend upon him, and do him homage? They may fancy they are his subjects as well as others, but they have reason to fear, that the day is coming, when the King of Zion will say to them or of them, 'Bring forth those mine enemies who would not that I should rule over them, and slay them before me.' At the same time, it is necessary here to add, take care what ministers you own and hear as the ambassadors of the King of Zion. This is as necessary a caveat in our day, as it was in the days of the apostles, 1 John iv. 1, 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.' And if you ask, How shall we try them? Christ answers the question, Matth. vii. 15, 16, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.' But, say you, what are their fruits by which they may be known? Ans. Do you see any of them fishing up and down for worldly gain? do you see them strengthening the hands of those that are pulling

down the carved work of reformation, and weakening the hands of those that are endeavouring to build it up? do you see them tormented by a testimony for the Lord's work in the land, and siding with these that are carrying on a course of backsliding? do you see them entering any other way than by the door of the house? depend upon it, they are not the true prophets of Christ, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. And therefore do not own them as the ambassadors of Christ; they do not carry Christ's commission; and therefore, though they shall say, 'Lo, here is Christ, or lo, he is there,' whatever pretensions they may make to the Spirit of Christ, yet go not after them, because these fruits are not the fruits of the faithful prophets of Christ's sending; and if he never sent them they cannot profit their hearers, however, perhaps, they may have the art of touching the imagination, or raising the passions.

2. Let all the subjects of the King of Zion *stand up for the honour of their King*. This is a day when manifold indignities are done unto his royal authority. His laws are counteracted both by civil and ecclesiastical authority, the liberties of his subjects are invaded, his Sabbaths are profaned, his professed ambassadors are throwing up their Master's sovereignty and alone headship in his church, and are yet sustained by others, that have not gone their length, as fellow-members in judicatories, without any censure or testimony. It is not a private owning of him that will do in such a day as this; he is publicly affronted, the crown is publicly taken off his head; he is injured by civil and ecclesiastical courts; he is injured in his doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; he is injured in his members; he is injured in his supreme Deity; he is injured in his headship and sovereignty over his church. Now I say, when he is thus publicly injured, he ought also to be publicly confessed. A public testimony hath been emitted, in a judicial way, by a handful of ministers, who, by the peculiar providence of God, have been brought into a particular situation, and that testimony has come abroad. It

is easy then to know what course to steer. If the rights of Christ, as King in his holy hill of Zion, be maintained in the judicatories of the establishment, then it is a sin to withdraw from them; but if they be trampling under foot the authority of the Son of God, by enacting laws in his house which are inconsistent with his laws, and with the liberties wherewith he hath made his people free; then we ought not to continue with them, especially when a public testimony is lifted up. Wherever his cause is displayed, and his truths are maintained by doctrine, worship, or discipline, there should the accession be; for 'the gathering of the people' should be there. If it be within the camp, stand there; if it be found in the fields, and city of the wood, it concerns us to follow him there, though reproach and persecution should follow; says the apostle, Heb. xiii. 13, 'Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach.'

3. Another word of exhortation to the subjects of the King of Zion is, *to act the part of faithful soldiers in fighting your King's battles*, against sin, Satan, and the world. Fight against sin; this is the grand enemy that Christ came to destroy, and make an end of; and therefore fight against it. Wage war against Satan; for Christ came to bruise his head: 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' Wage war against the world; for 'the friendship of this world is enmity against God;' the world was an enemy to Christ, and it will be an enemy to his cause, work, and testimony to the end. These are the enemies you are to enter the lists with. And that you may fight the battles of the King of Zion, (1.) Be sure to have his *kingdom and authority established within you*, and study to have every thought brought into captivity unto the obedience of the King of Zion, and be aware of harbouring any traitor in your own bosom. Can ever that man fight the open battles with the external enemies of the King of Zion, who is saying *a confederacy* with sin in his bosom? And therefore give daily battle unto indwelling sin, a body of sin and death, and 'take heed, lest there be in any of you

an evil heart of unbelief,' turning you aside 'from the living God.' (2.) You must *make use of your King's armoury*, and the weapons of his providing and appointing, if you would fight his battles; what these are, see Eph. vi. 13, 14, &c. 'Above all, taking the shield of faith,' &c. (3.) Keep within *the sight of your royal King*. As we must run our race, so we must fight our battles, 'looking unto Jesus.' A sight of the King of Zion inspires the soldiers with courage and greatness of spirit: 'They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. Consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.' (4.) Carry the *blood of your King continually along with you*, in the hand of faith, especially in the day of battle; for the enemy flees at the sight of it: Rev. xiii. 11, 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,' &c. (5.) In the time of open war study to *know and keep the camp of the King of Zion*, and be aware of the camp of the enemy. That is a question, some may say, we would gladly have resolved, Where is the King's camp? for some are saying, in our divided day, 'Lo it is here,' and others, 'Lo it is there;' will you tell us 'where he feedeth, where he makes his flocks to rest?' Answer, negatively, it is not always where stands the greatest multitude; for Christ's flock is but a *little flock*. In the days of Elijah it was among seven thousand. It is not always with a body of men calling themselves the church of Christ, enjoying the protection of law, and civil authority on their side; for we have heard and seen the day when popery and prelacy had the law of the land, and civil authority for them.

Quest. How then may the camp of the King of Zion be known?

Ans. (1.) The King's camp is where the King's standard is upheld, not where it is pulled down. Where is the testimony of Jesus, the covenanted testimony of Scotland? Whoever they be that are holding the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house, in their purity, there is the King's camp. (2.) The King's camp is where

his flock is gathered, and not where they are scattered, borne down, and oppressed. (3.) The King's camp is where his glory is most displayed, and not where his glory is darkened and obscured. (4.) The King's camp is where the smell of his garments gladdens the hearts of his subjects, Psal. xlv. &c. (5.) The King's camp may be known by the current of the flood of the old serpent's malice, Rev. xii. 15—17; there we read that 'the serpent cast out of his mouth waters as a flood after the woman;' *i. e.* the devil raised a storm of persecution and trouble against the church of Christ represented by the woman: and ver. 17, 'The dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' So then if you would know where is the camp of the King of Zion, where his standard is, you may observe where the weapons of hell are levelled; malice, reproach, persecution of hand or tongue, for there is the camp of Christ; for he 'fights neither against small nor great, but against the King of Israel,' and his seed and interest.

I proceed now to offer a word of exhortation unto the second sort of persons I named, and that is to you who are yet strangers to Zion's King and enemies to his kingdom and government.

I may premise in a few words, to clear the matter to you, who are the enemies of Christ. All who are yet in a state of nature and never felt the efficacy of the grace of God in a work of regeneration, are among the enemies of Zion's King, for 'the carnal mind is enmity against God.' All who never felt the power of Christ's prophetic office executed upon them in a work of illumination, opening the eyes of their understanding to know Christ in his person, natures, offices and undertaking, and to know the mind and will of God revealed in the word. All who are ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, I mean all legalists, who are cleaving to the law as a covenant, and have not 'submitted to the righteousness' of JEHOVAH TSIDKENU, are yet enemies

to the kingdom and government of Zion's King; never any in reality submitted to his laws and government who did not first submit unto his righteousness. All who sit under the drop of the gospel and have a Saviour, and his whole salvation brought near to them, and yet continue to reject him and his salvation through unbelief, Christ shall hold all such as enemies to his kingdom and government, Heb. ii. 3, 'how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?' Those wicked men that were invited to the marriage supper of the King, and yet refused, the King sends forth his armies and miserably destroys. All Gallios and neutrals in the cause of Christ, who are easy whether the cause of Christ sink or swim, are among his enemies; for 'he that gathereth not with us, scattereth abroad;' lukewarm Laodiceans the Lord spues out of his mouth. All that are combining against the Lord, and against his Anointed, and laying their heads and hands together to ruin the kingdom of Christ, a covenanted work of reformation, and with axes and hammers breaking down the carved work of the temple. All profane Esaus, who for a mess of pottage are selling their birthright as Christians, sacrificing their liberties whereby Christ hath made them free, for any secular or worldly consideration whatever. All who are, with the serpent, licking up the dust of the earth, and preferring the vanities of this world to things of eternal concern. All who are rejecting his laws as the rule of their obedience, and who are saying, 'we ourselves are lords, and will come no more unto thee,' and whose practice has this language, 'We will not have this man to reign over us: Let him depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of his ways.' I say, you, and all such, are enemies to Zion's King, and strangers to his government?

Now, my exhortation to you, as one of the heralds of the renowned King of Zion, is, to surrender your rebellious arms and submit unto his royal authority: 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.'

By way of motive, I need only put you in mind of some things that have already been insisted on; as, 1st. Consider the dismal wrath and danger abiding all his enemies. 2dly. Consider what kind of a King he is to whom ye are called to submit. See the properties or qualities of Zion's King, spoken to on the first head of doctrine. 3dly. Consider the advantages of his government. 4thly. Consider how earnest he is with the rebellious sinner, to come in under his rule and administration. (1.) He invites the rebels to submit, Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way,' &c. (2.) He beseeches sinners to be reconciled to him, and to God in him, 2 Cor. v. 20. (3.) He promises welcome with the golden sceptre of peace in his hand; 'Come to me who will, I will in no wise cast out.' (4.) He is grieved at the obstinacy of sinners, who will not submit, as in the case of Jerusalem, Luke xix. (5.) He reasons with sinners, and expostulates the matter, Isa. i. 18. Jer. ii. (6.) He swears that he has no pleasure in their death and ruin, Ezek. xxxiii. 11, 'As I live, I have no pleasure in your death,' &c. (7.) When there is no persuading of them, he takes away his kingdom with regret, Matth. xxiii. at the close. (8.) Consider how glad he is when a rebel sinner submits to him, as the father of the prodigal.

That you may become his subjects, I would add the following plain directions.

1. Be *convinced that ye are by nature enemies*, yea, enmity itself; and do not deceive yourselves, by imagining that you have good hearts toward God; for they are *desperately wicked*.

2. *Meditate much on your miserable thralldom* and bondage to sin, Satan, and the world, until the Son make you free.

3. *Attend carefully on the ordinances of the King of Zion*, particularly that great converting ordinance of the preaching of the word; for this is 'the rod of his strength, and it pleases him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;' and listen carefully to hear the voice of the

King of Zion in that ordinance, as Lydia, who attended on the ministry of Paul. See Isa. lv. 2, 3, &c.

4. With hearing of the word *join a diligent reading of it*: 'Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me.' The Bible is God's record concerning him whom he has set King in his holy hill of Zion; there his glory and beauty is deciphered with his own hand, there you have the will of the King, the latter will of the King sealed with his own blood.

5. *Be importunate supplicants at the King's throne for grace and mercy.* Zion's King is a merciful King; his work is to 'save the poor and needy,' Psal. lxxii. &c. He is liberal; 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God,' &c.

6. In the use of other means, *see that ye go about the great work of believing*; for without this it is impossible to please the King or his eternal Father; 'This is his commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. Do what you will, you will be held as rebels till you believe: 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' And therefore, I say, in obedience to the commands of God, and in a dependence on his grace and Spirit, attend to the work of believing: 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on his Son whom he hath sent.'

7. *Pray much for the purchased and promised Spirit from the King* who is in the midst of the throne; plead the promise, 'I will put my Spirit within you,' Ezek. xxxvi. 27. and that promise, Psal cx. 3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.'

8. *Cast out a red flag of war against all the enemies of the King of Zion*, whether within or without you. Begin the war against his enemies in your own hearts, in your walk, and in your families; begin reformation there: and having begun the war within carry it abroad in your profession. And take up the cause of Christ in the land, his public

interest, and do what in you lies to oppose and discountenance those who are attempting to ruin his kingdom and interest in the world, particularly in the land wherein you live. For if his kingdom be taken from us, if he remove the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of his house, wo to our land; then the songs of our temple shall be turned into howlings, and our poor posterity shall, in a few years, be a company of pagan and popish idolaters.

Well, then, let me renew my call and invitation unto all strangers, foreigners, and rebels, to come and submit to the government of him whom God has set King in his holy hill of Zion. It was foretold by Jacob, on his death-bed, that 'the gathering of the people should be to him,' and by Isaiah, that 'unto him should the Gentiles seek.' O that this may be the day and time wherein this prophecy shall be fulfilled! This time hundred years, viz. 1638, there was a strange gathering of the whole land unto the Lord Jesus, as their glorious Head and King. When his work seemed to be buried, and his friends were reckoning that they were like a company of dry bones, it pleased the Lord to breathe upon the dry bones, by the wind of his Spirit, and presently a great army stood up, and gathered life and strength to fight his battles, insomuch that the whole land, in a little time, was brought under the oath of a covenanted allegiance to the King of Zion; and such a vigorous stand was at that time made for the royalties of his crown, that these very powers then in being, which had been attempting to bury his cause, were obliged to give way to it. Although the kingdom and interest of Christ be brought low at this day yet let us not lose hopes of its resurrection, but 'remember the years of the right hand of the Most High;' let us 'remember the works of the Lord, and his wonders of old; for the residue of the Spirit' is still with him; 'his hand is not shortened, that he cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that he cannot hear.' A nation can be born to him at once, just by the swaying of his royal sceptre, the sound of his voice in the dispensation

of the gospel. O that this may be the hour or year in which the dead through Scotland may hear the voice of the Son of man, and live!

Mean time, I say, I desire, as one of the meanest of his heralds, to invite and call, to intreat and beseech, yea, in his name and authority, I require all hearing me this day, to believe in his name, to trust him for salvation from sin, Satan, wrath, and hell, and to submit to his authority, to receive the law at his mouth, and to own him as their alone Judge, King, and Lawgiver: 'Thou art my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.'

THE END.

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